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ABSTRACT

The following book on composition in the elementary school grows out of the activities of the Tri-University Project (now called the Nebraska TTT Institute in Elementary Education). The project is concerned with improving the education of young children by working to improve the education of the teachers in Higher Education who educate the teachers of these young children. The community of the Tri-University Project includes children, teachers, teachers of teachers from about the country and members of all sorts of community groups. This book is the first of a series envisaged as emerging from the project. The writing contained in it is done by teachers, children, and teachers of teachers. Papers included in the book are: Some Examples of Sixth-Grade Composition by Frances Reinehr; The Role of Language in Learning in the Elementary School by James Britton; The Exploring Cat Kittens by Dawn Whipp; Understanding Children's Writing by Leslie Whipp; Morning Haze by Leslie Whipp; Some Reflections on the Subject of Composition by Geoffrey Summerfield; and Images of Man and the Persuasive Style: Writing in the Elementary School by Alton Becker. A bibliography of 15 publications is included. (Author/DB)

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ESSAYS
and
ADDRESSES
on
COMPOSITION

edited by

Geoffrey Summerfield

Visiting Professor, Tri-University Project

University of Nebraska

Lincoln, Nebraska

1968-1969

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E S S A Y S

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PREFACE

The following book on composition in the elementary school grows out of the activities of the Tri-University Project[1]. The project is concerned with improving the education of young children by working to improve the education of the teachers in Higher Education who educate the teachers of those young children. The community of the Tri-University Project includes children, teachers, teachers of teachers from about the country and members of all sorts of community groups. This book is the first of a series envisaged as emerging from the project. The writing contained in it is done by teachers, children, teachers of teachers. We would hope that the book is dappled as is the community of the project.

PAUL A. OLSON

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[1]Note: The Tri-University Project at Nebraska has, since the writing of this book, been renamed. It is now called the Nebraska TTT Institute in Elementary Education.

A Note on the Contributors

Some of the papers gathered together here were delivered at various times and in various places, between 1967 and 1969, under the aegis of the Tri-University Project.* They were written from a variety of backgrounds, both American and British, and are unified both by their sponsorship and also by their sharing of a more or less disinterested view of the act of composition; disinterested, that is, in the sense that the view taken was not subject to any institutional sanction, tradition, or orthodoxy. The reader may find it most valuable to start with the papers that Frances Reinehr and I offer, then move, via Les Whipp and James Britton, to Alton Becker; and then repeat the sequence in reverse.

Note: The editorial hand has moved very lightly over the speeches; the reader will recognize at times the rhetoric of the public lecture; I saw no point in trying to remove this. Wherever I have added an editorial footnote, I have enclosed it in square brackets.

GEOFFREY SUMMERFIELD

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*Alton Becker's at the Tri-University Project Conference in Denver, Colorado, in September, 1967; James Britton's at the Conference in New Orleans, February, 1968; Les Whipp's "Understanding Children's Writing" was a contribution to the discussions of the Tri-University Project at Lincoln, 1968-1969; and "Morning Haze" was an address delivered to the Hawaii Council of Teachers of English. Frances Reinehr's and my own toward the end of the school year, 1968-1969, spent in Elliott Elementary School, Lincoln, Nebraska, although mine draws slightly on a Tri-University Conference paper written on returning from the New Orleans Conference, January, 1969, and on discussions at the University of Detroit and Northwestern University.

COMPOSITION

INTRODUCTION

I was delighted when Paul Olson asked me to edit this little volume, since it gives me an opportunity to help into circulation some ideas, issues, and compositions that deserve to be circulated; and, more personally, because it gives me a chance to give American readers an occasion for meeting James Britton, perhaps for the first time: so fruitful and so pervasive is his influence in Britain that most of us who teach English over there have given up trying to measure our debt to him. Suffice it to say that it is virtually impossible to hear an intelligent discussion of the job of teaching English that does not, directly or indirectly, reveal the influence of his benign and acute mind.

The notion of taking such a thing as composition-in-the-elementary-school seriously is fairly novel: Matthew Arnold, within certain limits, did so more than a hundred years ago, but since his time the language arts curriculum of the elementary school has been the victim both of socio-economic pressures and of educational fads and fashions. Taking compositions seriously means, a priori, taking the composers seriously: and elementary school children have been viewed--occupational skills casting their shadows long before--either as proto-clerks or as the victims of yesteryear's now unfashionable fashions (and, by implication, as the beneficiaries of today's fashionable fashions). At no time have they been consistently subject to an inclusive, disinterested, and intellectually respectable enquiry: the plethora of text-books and of professional magazines bears witness to the fact that our conceptions of the elementary school pupil have been, by turns, utilitarian, philistine, mechanistic, dull witted, sentimental, or puritanical.

Is our present condition such as to justify hope? Despite the continuing inanities and banalities perpetuated by so many of the teachers' colleges, despite the hard-selling ulterior persuasions of the text-book publishers, and despite right-wing cries for a return to erstwhile rigors, I think that it is. And the evidence, it seems to me, is to be found not so much in the tepid pieties and orthodoxies of the educationists, or in the quietism and intellectual flaccidity of the teacher-training institutions, as in the painfully slow and rather haphazard meeting of minds operating in a variety of ostensibly diverse disciplines: social anthropology, developmental psychology, linguistics, rhetoric, and social psychology--to name merely some of the more obvious.

The promise--the peculiar promise--of the Tri-University Project lies, in part, in the fact that it can serve, and has served, as a meeting place for such disciplines: not as a promiscuous pot-pourri, a melting-pot for the watered-down, but as a forum for the presentation of specific insights, of particular growing points, which can help elementary school teachers and the trainers of such teachers to operate from a position of more, rather than less, intellectual competence. In the interests of such projects as Tri-U, and because I believe that through the agency of such projects, elementary education <u>can</u> be improved in central, important, and urgent ways, I would enter this simple plea: that the theoreticians who serve them should immerse themselves in a peculiarly valuable interplay or commerce: a constant and sustained to and fro movement, analogous to that which Henry James envisaged as the most fruitful state for the artist, a movement from Art to Life, from Life to Art: a pendulum motion, exposing theory to the exigencies of practice, and exposing practice to the questions of theory: such exposure, such interaction, is crucial, and we neglect it at our peril.

Both in Britain and in the United States we have come to recognize the urgent need for means of mediating, of promoting, such transactions. In Britain, the Schools Council and the Teachers' Centers, regionally disposed, and in the United States the conferences sponsored by the N. C. T. E. and such agencies as the Tri-University Project are beginning to meet this need. At this point in time, it would be nothing short of miraculous if such efforts did not meet with failures, did not promote misunderstandings as well as understandings: the state of the art is one of flux, and on some fronts--e.g. linguistics--of rapid proliferation and expansion; teachers in elementary schools have to be 'practical people' and, naturally, most willingly respect the expertise that gives them something that they can take back into the classroom on Monday morning. But, beset with false starts, animosities, hesitations, nervous tensions and mandarinism as we are, the present situation is, I think, hopeful. We <u>are</u> moving; in the words of Thom Gunn:

> At worst, one is in motion; and at best,
> Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,
> One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Geoffrey Summerfield
University of Nebraska
May 1969

SOME EXAMPLES OF SIXTH GRADE COMPOSITION

-Frances Reinehr, Elliott School
Lincoln, Nebraska

My perspective on children's writing differs a bit from most represented in this collection of essays. Mine must be much less theoretical. I'm in the classroom, a sixth-grade classroom, in a school serving a lower socio-economic urban population; in the 1968-1969 school year. I worked with about 37 kids, almost all of whom were either kids from low income families or were problem children in the school system or were both. There were four cultures represented: Negro, Indian, Mexican and White. When I think of children's writing, I think of my experience with those kids, with their writing. I think of how they began the term, distrusting writing, its aims, its meaning. That's essentially what I want to recall in these notes, the writing those kids did last year and the conditions under which they wrote and the purposes that writing came to serve for them.

Let me speak first about the conditions in the classroom, for to a large extent my role as a composition teacher was limited to trying to provide conditions under which writing could be seen by the kids as a useful, meaningful and desirable mode of behavior.

I had an open classroom situation. That is, there were no desks, but rather round tables, chairs, shelves stocked with lots of books, not just text books, but story books, poetry anthologies, pop/rock lyric collections, collections of legends and myths from every culture I could find, and science explorations. There were interest centers and lots of recording and listening materials freely available to the children.

When I began working with the children in the open classroom, I made mistakes. I began the term trying to teach composition by commission. For all the children, this was a first time experience in an open classroom. It was also my first time in this situation, although I had taught four previous years in a traditional setting. I would give the children a lead sentence like, "When I looked into the mirror this morning I found I had changed into a _____." The children were to complete this sentence and add additional sentences until they had created some clever paragraph of personification. This type of assignment failed because they did not understand the form. Also, for most of the children, writing was not a process they had a hold on nor a use for.

I had to back up and begin again. I found that it was important to

write out in large script, comments the children were making about their environment and their experiences. I placed these quotations around the room. This was rather like the "Quotable quotes" which appear in some newspapers. The appearance of these quotes became invitations for some children to try to say something which might end up on the wall to be read by all. There was a certain notability attached to this process. Maybe there was for the children the beginning of the belief that they had something to say which could be respected. Another way to invite children to use their language was to have them tell stories into the tape-recorder. A second child could either listen to or transcribe this story. Some children interviewed visitors who came into the room. These taped interviews were transcribed by other children and were posted for the entire class to read.

We read myths and legends from various cultures. We acted out portions of these stories. We studied the Trojan War and the House of Atreus so we could have background knowledge when we attended the play, Electra. For most of the children this was a first-time experience --seeing a live play. They were an enraptured audience. Following this experience, we made papier-mâché masks. Later these masks became the substance for a bound book, an anthology of monsters, some benign, some terrible, many drawing upon themes and motifs previously encountered in myths and legends we had studied.

The cultural environment of the child outside the school has to relate to the modes the child finds useful to work in, the written modes he wants to use. Currently, the pop/rock lyricists are playing a large part in the cultural environment of my students outside the classroom, and should be recognized by many critics as poets of our time. If any admiration for poetry was to be generated in this classroom, it obviously could be most efficiently developed by examining pop/rock. We listened to lyrics of such modern songs as Simon and Garfunkel's "A Most Peculiar Man," and others, transcribing them, talking about themes, often themes of loneliness and alienation. Such talk stirred some children to consider their own experiences as like that of which these writers made lyrics and they recalled anecdotes about "peculiar men and women and relatives" who lived in their neighborhoods. We followed this plan again when we studied ballads. First, we had some choral reading of "Get Up and Bar the Door" and "Lord Randall." Some children wondered about current ballads and the themes present in them so we listened to, transcribed, and talked about "The Ode to Billy Joe." Several of the children, though twelve and thirteen years old, did not discover that this ballad may well be a lament on abortion, but many did, suggesting that in some areas of experience they were more knowledgeable than I would have at first assumed.

These kinds of listening, transcribing-talk happenings had to precede stark writing assignments because my role as a teacher was to

discover and provide in the experience of the child, forms, genres, modes, tools, and strategies which the children might find useful.

Providing forms, genres, modes, tools, and strategies which children might find useful is a tremendously important task for teachers to be concerned with. In Love and Will, Rollo May points out that "The neurotic is one who feels the conflict of alien ation and nihilism, but is unable to give them meaningful form." It would be arrogant to assume as a teacher that what one did saved any child from neuroticism, yet teachers can, as I found, do their bit to equip children with creative alternatives to sterile or destructive frustration.

For me to begin commissioning children to use forms with which they had no familiarity or respect nor use for was to continue the invitation towards the sort of neurosis Dr. May discusses. These children needed no more of that. Rather they needed to experience a variety of concrete forms and models which they could internalize for ready application when the need for use was there. Contrasted with the alienated adults, Dr. May discusses in Love and Will, these children could still feel the world; they wanted to comment on it, but they did not know how.

The invitation to become the composer, the user of literary forms did, in fact, result from the freedom from many different constraints, but perhaps most of all from concern about spelling, usage, and punctuation. Once a child wants to write, his writing will improve, does improve, even in these inconsequentialities, but more important, he dares the adventure into the unknown world of myth making, poetry writing, script creation and satire.

It is also important to recognize that the absence of places for speaking, writing and drama is in part responsible for inhibiting children's use of their language, both oral and written in the classroom. Imagination can only be freed if there is space and time for liberation and things--objects and events--for their minds and imaginations to interact with. When children come to believe in their freedom, they can also come to use writing to handle psychologically threatening experiences. They use writing to create bound, illustrated story books; for their families, as texts for other students, as things of which they are simply "makers." They use writing to compile anthologies and they use writing to satirize modern life.

Some of the pieces my kids wrote illustrate some of the different kinds of purposes they did use writing for. During much of the year, one girl often said, "I can't write nothin'. I never could." After many attempts at story writing over several weeks, she quite easily one spring morning wrote this story:

Nobody knew where it came from, but there it was a big, green fish. It was in the Pacific ocean and nobody knew how to get it out because it was so big. All it did was just lay there, but when anybody would come near him, he would get up really fast and start splashing water all over them. On the side of him he had a big sign that said if anybody comes near me I will kill them. People knew that somebody had to put this on the fish. So one day all the people of the town got together and talked about this fish. It was decided that the biggest man in town would go over on the other side of the Pacific ocean to see if this was a make believe fish with some man in it.

The biggest man was Joe Hill. He went over there. When he got on the other side he took a boat and went to the fish.

The fish started splashing, but Big Joe kept on going to it. Joe came behind the fish so the fish couldn't see him. Joe saw a zipper so he unzipped it and there was this little man. Joe said, I'm going to have to take you back to town. When they got there it was decided that the man would have to be put into jail.

This girl's personal biography includes the drama of a weak, alcoholic mother, attached to a small man whose only apparent interest is a gun collection. What one observes in her story is that (a) there are two male roles, and (b) with contrasting values attached. One of the important ways in which the fantasy is working is to formalize some of her struggle to understand masculine roles, to define for herself what are desirable masculine roles and to possibly neutralize the threat of male sexuality. The story suggests that children's stories can be seen to be ways of organizing and formalizing and controlling psychological threats, fears and anxieties.

Another twelve year old girl is the author of this next self-initiated story. Her life is an endless struggle for understanding of her predicament. Her elderly father, a displaced farmer, spends his days in an alcoholic ward, never communicating with his family. Her mother works two jobs to keep the family in essentials.

Once I thought I saw this scene in my dreams and I will tell you about it. I saw a man stooping over like he was going to pick up something. Outside in the yard by the porch. And a child was

leaning over the porch rail. The mother stood up as if she were looking for someone to come. Their stomachs were swelled up. They acted as if they were stranded on an island, but they weren't. They lived 22 miles from the nearest town and they lived on a road in which no one hardly lived because they believed it was haunted. These people looked forward to having someone come so everyday for two or three hours they would stand and watch for practically nothing. They would go around looking for something to eat. Then they were lucky and a good shot they could throw a stone and kill a rabbit. But now they had no strength for that. So they went out looking for dandelion greens. Then they came back home, washed the dandelion greens off, fried them and ate them. Then maybe they could catch frogs and have frog legs for supper. Then the man would go out to the garden to see if there vegetables were ready, then the father would go to the spring and get water for the next day. Then they would sleep and start the day again and the same things were happening.

What the girl has done is to create an impossible world, one of despair, loneliness and near starvation. She confronted, through this story, certain aspects of her own reality. In the story, no one becomes a hero, a savior, nor does an ideal community emerge. The family unit merely continues to survive. Note the effectiveness of the way in which the word "then" works in this composition. It becomes a repeated signal, a warning of an apparent endlessness.

Another twelve year old child whose painful shyness alienated her from ninety percent of the round of life finally grappled with a monster, and named it. She wrote:

> Fear is being alone at night in a big house that you are not quite use to. Fear is being afraid of people that do not know you. Fear is walking in dark woods alone without anyone to talk to or walk along with you. You wish that you would not have gone by yourself. Fear to little children is coming to school for the first time. Fear is being afraid of something. Some people think that fear is in your mind and other people think it is something else. But whatever fear is it's here.

Once you can name a psychological monster, you have begun to hold him in your power. It was an amazing thing to watch this child begin to write. When she began the term in the "open-classroom" she could not communicate, but the openness was an invitation for her to try. She began to write often, especially in response to pictures in a file which served as ideas for writing.

For some children, the use of literary form means finding a way to manipulate words until they string together into a sensible whole. One thirteen year old girl, unsure of her writing capabilities because of repeated unsuccessful attempts, finally discovered the key to a pourqua myth:

> Once a house was on fire and the duck
> went in and his feet melted and when
> he came outside his feet went all out
> and that's how they got webbed feet.

I had the sense that this girl breathed a "There, I've finally done it," sigh when this story was on paper, but there are other important insights to be gained if we look closely at this story. Piaget describes the "pre-operational" child as one who is in a pre-scientific-scientific stage. That is, the child is organizing and classifying the data he perceives and relating it, not in the way that the adult scientist organizes and classifies, but in the way in which it works for him. One of the major tasks for the child is finding order in the world. This girl's myth exhibits some of the characteristics of pre-scientific, scientific thought of the "pre-operational" child. She has based her story on the external world: that which happens to wax when applied to heat also applies to the duck's feet. Both objects from the real world share similarities: a smudged, melted run-together appearance. So what happens to candles exposed to flames could have happened to the duck's feet. This child's sense of the world, how a kind of thing, "the duck," came to have certain characteristics is based on her observations of what happens to another kind of observable object, a candle exposed to heat. The analogy states one way in which transformations work for kids, how one thing becomes another thing.

Children use analogy and metaphor when they talk and when they write, and in a mode in which metaphor is an adult feature they can often produce very mature writing indeed. Haiku is such a mode and the following haiku, each by a different sixth grade child, illustrate how metaphor can come into children's writing, as well as other kinds of progress kids make in acquiring control of a genre.

> Take an ant, its beady eyes
> Looking afar,
> The grass is a jungle.

Raindrops are lonely--
They come to earth to visit
But we close our doors.

In the gloom of night
A bird sits quietly in her nest
Waiting for her chicks.

The first haiku is a view of nature, shown to us by a child, through the eyes of an ant. The syntactic features are one independent clause, preceded by a command and two modifiers. These are some of the syntactic features of the mature haiku, but the child's haiku contains a form of the verb "be," most often not a feature of the mature haiku.

In the second haiku, we find two distinct independent clauses followed by a dependent clause. The haiku also contains a form of the verb, "be." However, it is worth noting that the child is working with a metaphor. She is ascribing to raindrops some qualities which are uniquely human: loneliness, visitation and rejection. She didn't entirely succeed in producing a mature haiku, but she did succeed in making a metaphorical statement about her experience, that is, that life is sometimes lonely and there is rejection.

The third child shows most progress in the use of the haiku form. This sample contains one independent clause, plus two dependent clauses stretched over three lines. He has also managed to include three words: gloom, quietly and waiting, all of which help to convey one moment of expectancy, of impending birth.

Earlier, I mentioned briefly that we had made papier-mâché masks for use in creative drama. The children also came to write about these masks and this collection of stories was bound into an anthology. Some of these stories proved to be extremely interesting.

One girl's description of her mask was written during a time when her friends had shut her out:

My mask is a cat. I am a very strange kind of cat. I am the only one of my kind. The other cats won't have me around them because I am so strange. There are gray, white, blonde, black cats, but I am white, black, gold and silver and I have green ears. I can't eat what other cats eat. I eat worms and all other kinds of bugs. I live in the water. That's why other cats won't have me around them.

This statement of alienation is a good example of a child using a form to externalize something which was generating an internal conflict. The existential crisis, the "Now" for the adolescent is not one of non-feeling, but one of coping with all intense feeling. Nothing matters so desperately as peer acceptance.

The next two mask stories struck me because they were so highly moralistic. I suspect this is the result of some children finding great difficulty in overcoming the need to write to please the teacher, to write what he believes the teacher wants to see and read. They are written by two different children. The first is complete with a moral: if you do a, then b and c will happen.

MISS MAGILNOIED GLICILODESEY

> This is how her name came to be. It came from five words. They are ugly, evil, magic, good and noisy. She has a sweet personality. She sees you on the street and asks you over for dinner and she says she remembers you from way back and especially likes children. Then when you arrive she'll start the water and tells you to get washed up and straighten your clothes. Meanwhile she is chopping carrots and peas, etc. Then she runs in and grabs you and throws you in the pot, throws her magic lid on and she has you for her dinner. The moral is don't go into anyone's house without knowing them or without an adult.

The second mask story is moralistic in a different sense. The child has created the nicest possible man in the false hero sense present in so much of current advertising themes.

> My mask is something like a man's face, but he doesn't have a mustache or a beard. His name is Mr. Johnson. He is a very nice man. He is nice to his wife and two kids and parents. He has a nice job working on steel. They live in California. When they have free time, they visit their friends next door.

Notice the way in which the word "nice" is repeated to convey a sense of acceptability, an averageness, a Jones-like quality. It is hard to believe that this is the child's ideal man, but that might be true. The story may also suggest, though, that to some children, this dull, nice simpleton is an ideal.

The next story, another sample from the mask anthology is a different sort of statement. There are two major themes running through, one of which is culture, the other degradation.

THE SPIDER SPELL

Her name is Ramona. She's a very nice lady. She's an Indian. She got lost in a mine and can't find her way home. And every time she sees a spider, she eats it and turns into a spider herself and goes around eating flies, crickets and other insects. But she's very pretty. In the future she will meet a handsome man named Robert and they will get married and when she kisses him he will have the spider spell. They will be spiders to the end of their days and they will have one child.

I mentioned earlier that there were four cultures represented in my classroom. The author of this mask story is a Negro. The child did not, during the year, come to use a Negro in any of her stories as protagonists, but always used Indians or Mexicans. I think it is also important to know that the child was separated from her real mother and lived in a foster home. She had a sense of herself as an unacceptable, unlovable person. If one knows these facts about the child, one can sense what she is writing about: an acute alienation (lost in a cave) and a hideous self-concept (eats flies, crickets and other insects, all of which are non-acceptable edibles in our culture). She uses this fantasy to work a person (Ramona) with unacceptable characteristics (a member of a minority culture, a user of strange habits) from near nothingness into a coveted position (marriage and parenthood).

The "media is the message" age leads some children to satirize along the lines of Mad magazine or TV's "Laugh-In." Satirical writing does not come early in a year-long adventure of the "open classroom" nor does it come easily to all children. The two children who wrote these two satires which follow were the most secure children in the classroom. The satires were self-initiated. The first example is clearly a whimsical spoof on TV commercials and the ludicrous situations she sees portrayed:

THE PERILS OF KATHLEEN THE MAIDEN

A long time ago in the middle ages lived a fair maiden by the name of Kathleen.

She lived up in a castle way way up on a cliff. Down below the castle was a very muddy river.

Kathleen was held a prisoner to the evil man by the name of Hendy MacIntosh.

When Kathleen was little, she was taken from her mother and put into a dungeon because Hendy MacIntosh saw her smoke in public. One day her true love Sir King Arthur was going down the muddy river on one of his hundred ships. He was going fishing when by luck he saw the castle.

Kathleen was looking out the window at the time. Hendy MacIntosh saw King Arthur coming up the muddy river. So he ran to his tower and turned on his whirlpool machine.

King Arthur was whistling Swanee River and fishing happily when the water started going around and then the boat started going down into the river and soon King Arthur was in the dungeon. All the people on the land thought he was a goner.

Kathleen was walking the grounds of the castle when she decided to go to the dungeon where she grew up and to her surprise she saw King Arthur.

King Arthur jumped out of his skin and after he got back in he said, "Where can I get out of here?" Kathleen cryed and said, "I don't know, but Hendy the Evil has trapped me here all my life."

So to there surprise as they walked out of the dungeon King Arthur and Kathleen fell into a hole and pretty soon they were on their way to freedom.

This same child spent the last month of the school year preparing a script for a radio serial which is a commentary on modern social ills, including every problem from racism to adultery. She recruited some of her classmates to help her with the production of this script.

This second satire is whimsical also, but the state satirized is one of our most cherished: Motherhood.

Many many years ago in the days of the knights lived way on top of a hill in a little cottage in Calmville, a fair and beautiful maiden by the name of Sandy. Only one thing that made Sandy unhappy was that her lover Sir Lancelot was held captive on the other side of Calmville by the deadly villian Hatchet Van-Stumlin in the dungeon of Hatchet's castle. Sandy weeped and weeped every night to think of her lover, Sir Lancelot in that monstrous dungeon. One night she was weeping when all of a sudden through the door burst Super Mother. "Super Mother, what

brings you here?"
"I come to rescue your only true love."
"How do you know about him." "I heard someone mention a fair maiden by the name of Sandy when I was flying through the air and I know you were the only one Sandy so I flew to him and he told me all there was to know. So I brought Lancelot home to you."
"Oh Super Mother, you're my hero, you've got the act of bravery." "We're together thanks to you, Super Mother."

This next satiric statement is subtler. I see it as a protest against the plastic, programmed kind of man we see too much of. It was written in response to hearing the poem, "The Unknown Citizen," by W. H. Auden.

The average man goes to work in the morning at 9:00 a.m. and gets home at 9:00 p.m. at night. He's a sports man in golf and racing cars. He has two children. A boy and a girl. He is a manager of a New Sports Car Corporation. He is the Man of the Year's Best Dressed Man in Style for 1969. His opinion of the outside world is: That nothing is perfect or will ever be. He has plans of rebuilding his corporation into the newest of any building in the state.

Certainly, all teachers everywhere, regardless of their educational philosophy or rhetorical persuasion, are often proud of what their students write. I should in fact be less proud than at any other time in my teaching experience for I did less "teaching" than ever before.

Once I recognized that "topic sentences" would lead us only farther into the kind of darkness these children were afraid of, the more I tried to become the observer, to learn from the kids the uses they could make of the richness and diversity, privation and hum-drum of both their school and non-school cultures.

At the end of this first year's experience in the "open-classroom," as I look again at what the children wrote, I cannot help but consider the possibilities for creativity for children who could spend six years of their elementary education years in open-classrooms.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN LEARNING

IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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I want to begin by saying I'm honored, if not at the moment overwhelmed, by an invitation to come all the way from London to what is an American educational conference. I believe myself in talking, in the face-to-face exchange of talk as one of the most productive ways of learning. And, I like to think that since the Dartmouth conference in 1966, something of a trans-Atlantic dialogue has begun to take place--something which will be of value to countries on both sides of the Atlantic.

Part of that trans-Atlantic dialogue was conducted last Easter, when a team of visitors from Illinois came to look at secondary schools in England and Scotland. I recently went through some of the comments they made, unedited, before any report was written, and some of these struck me as extremely interesting. One that I want to mention to you, suggested by more than one of the Illinois observers, was to the effect that in our schools in England, we showed considerable success in getting the younger children in the secondary school--the 11 and 12 year olds--into a working community, but then with the 16 and 17 year olds, we failed to use that working capacity, and resorted to doing all the work ourselves from the teacher's desk.

I think that was a just comment, and I think it reflects the situation in England at the moment, where there exist side by side two traditions; and these two traditions come into conflict with each other. At the moment they are in head-on collision, in the discussions of the proposed new middle schools. It looks as though, ironically enough, we might have two kinds of middle school--one which is effected from the top downwards, and the other which is produced from the bottom upwards; and they'll be quite different. One of these two traditions I would call the "grammar school tradition," the "academic tradition" fathered by the grammar schools with godparents from Oxbridge (Oxford and Cambridge); a tradition that flowers in the pre-university sixth form, but which has met with massive failure in the comprehensive schools in trying to realize a policy of secondary education for all. The other tradition I would call, rather more dubiously, the "infant school tradition." I think the name is justified, although not entirely adequate. This tradition represents the sort of thing that's gone on in the infant schools at home for a very long time, that is making its influence felt upwards and now affects about half of our junior schools, and is moving up to the secondary level. I suppose it would be boasting if I said it affects more than

one-tenth of our secondary schools at the present time. The schools we selected for the Illinois team to go to, on their instructions, would be amongst those one-tenth. Since the examination system still supports the academic tradition and affects the top end of the age range, you will get within such schools a collision between these two views, represented by the younger and older age groups in the same schools. Sir Alec Clegg, who is one of our most prominent directors of education, in a television interview last week on the "raising of the school leaving age" contrasted the kind of learning that goes on in junior schools, where the infant school tradition has its hold, and what he called "knowledge peddling." Now, there are more favorable ways of describing the academic tradition than "knowledge peddling;" however, since I am pinning my faith to the other tradition, I let that stand as a means of raising at least a healthy opposition.

If you ask primary school teachers in England to describe what it is they are about, what it is they are setting out to do, I think you may hear some rather vague, and perhaps out-worn terms. "Learning through experience," "activity methods," "discovery methods," "child-centred curriculum," "rich environment," "integrated day," and if you press further and penetrate beyond these rather vague terms, I think you are likely to be given a somewhat homespun philosophy of education derived from actual classroom practice. All I want to say about that at the moment is that it's the very reverse of the too-slick educational theory, which is able to banish all reference to children to the footnote level. I want to make a very brief comment upon practice, not theory, at this stage--the practice in our junior schools at home.

A junior school classroom is likely to be a room full of things, things to look at and to read and talk about, and most of those would have been produced by the children in the school. And also things to do, things to play with, things to work with, things to work on. In most cases the children will be working individually, or in pairs or in threes or fours, and in most cases they will have chosen what it is they are doing. It will be noticeable that they are talking about it all the time they're doing it, to each other or to the teacher. Now, I know one primary school class in London where there are two items on the class time-table. One is called "Your time" and the other is called "My time." What I have been describing to you goes on in "Your time." In "My time," the teacher will be explaining and discussing something with the class as a whole, or watching a dramatic improvisation that some group of children is putting on to show to the others, or reading stories or poems to the whole class, or possibly listening to a child telling the rest of the class something that he's done or read or discovered. Cutting across even the two items of that rudimentary time-table will be such activities as going out for walks in the neighborhood, visiting buildings, encounters with people, doing jobs in the neighborhood, going out to

collect photographs or tape-recordings or samples or to make drawings of something that's outside the school. And then sometimes weeks in the country, or even weeks abroad. Now all that I think is familiar to many of you for several reasons. I want to leave it at that because I do need to have it in the background as a theatre of operations for any campaign which we might get involved in planning together.

Now, for my particular campaign this morning, one arising from a sense that learning depends a great deal upon language. I want to ask, "How do people learn, when there's nobody there to teach them?" I ask this, not as a subversive plot to get rid of teachers, but to find out something about learning. "How do people learn, when there's nobody there to teach them?" My primary answer is, "by talking". If you want concrete evidence of this, perhaps this conference itself might serve as an example.

But let's take it slowly. Our view of learning depends upon our view of language. Our view of language depends upon our view of man. I take as my very general starting point a quotation from the philospher Ernst Cassirer:

> Reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life in all their richness and variety. But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence, instead of defining man as "animal rationale" we should define him as "animal symbolicum". By so doing, we can designate his specific difference, and we can understand the new way open to man--the way to civilization.

That has spread the canvas pretty wide. My job now is to narrow it. Putting it very crudely, oversimplifying Cassirer's view, let us say that we act in the real world by means of a representation. We construct a representation of the world for ourselves, and we act in the real world via that representation. What is happening, happens even while we react to it, and is lost, but the representation goes on. And we may work upon it. By that means, we gain a retrospect, and prophesying on the basis of that retrospect, we gain also a prospect. You may remember that Yeats said, not of man, but of animals, "Nor dread, nor hope attend a dying animal." Man, on the other hand, creates a prospect and a retrospect by symbolizing experience to himself.

Now what I've just said is one way of interpreting human behaviour. As such, it is an example of itself. It consitutes one way of representing human behaviour, and there are other ways. Again, staying at the crude level, if I make a map of a district I'm staying in, I am, very briefly, representing my experiences of the countryside. But I might also be seen to be setting forth the expectations I should entertain of this countryside when next I visit it, and by which I shall travel

intelligently in the area. Now, if you make that even cruder, by supposing that that map is in my mind, and by supposing that I modify it in the light of what I find continually, then you have a very rough picture of the theory of representation, the theory by which Cassirer calls man, animal symbolicum. My representation of the world differs from yours, not only because experience uses us differently, but also because my way of representing what happens to us is different from your way of representing it. I am not a camera. I partly act in the way a camera does, because my representation reflects what is in the outside world, to some degree. There is a drawing in, as a camera does, an introjection of what is outside. But there is also my way of representing it, which is different from yours. And that is not an introjection but a projection. If you can imagine a screen upon which is drawn a representation of the outside world, but the picture is a result not simply of what is drawn in, but also of what is projected. My way of representing the world reflects, in other words, my inner self, my feelings, and so on.

We construct each our own representation of the world, but we work upon each other's. The fact that a representation has duration in time not only enables us to work upon it ourselves, but also to have other people work upon it. Martin Buber, the Israeli educationist, lecturing in London many years ago, took as his text, "Experience comes to man as 'I', but it is by experience as 'We' that he builds the common world in which he lives."

Secondly, we improvise upon our representation. We can do that with a strict eye upon prediction, as we might do if we talked to a man whose job we were going to take over--finding out what the job was like, casing the joint, with a very keen eye upon prediction. Or we may improvise freely, wildly, light-heartedly, with no concern for what our improvisation has to say about actuality. One simple example of that is the child who delights to think that all the earth might be paper and all the sea might be ink.

Experience comes to the small boy as "I," but what he makes of it is very much affected by what his mother says when he tells her all about it. And so I've come at last to language, and it's time I did. Some of you may also suspect I am now going to quote Sapir. Having arrived at language, what better linguist to illustrate the point I'm after than Edward Sapir, the father of American linguistics, the father perhaps of modern linguistics? Edward Sapir says, "The primary function of language is generally said to be communication." But he demurs at this, and goes on to say, "It is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualization of the tendency to see realities symbolically." And he gives a gloss on that elsewhere, "an actualization in terms of vocal expression of a tendency to master reality, not by direct and ad hoc handling of this element, but by the reduction of experience to familiar form." So language, Sapir says, is one way among

others of representing the experienced world. But it is a key way. And here I want to draw, not only upon the ideas of Sapir but also upon the work of the Russian psychologists, Vygotsky and Luria. Although language is only one way of representing experience, it is a key way of doing so. It is, to put it very simply, the most explicit way. You can't imagine in fact any better way of following unseen events than listening to a running commentary in words, because language relates to events in an explicit, direct fashion.

Now, language gains this power because of its own complex internal organization. Putting the matter very briefly language is, in the first place, a means of classifying. I'm sure many of you will be familiar with Bruner's classic example of the need to classify in language, when he points out there are seven million distinguishable colours. If you take everything into consideration, shade and density and so on, there are seven million occasions upon which the human eye can indicate "this is different from that." And yet we cover our colour business of the day mainly in terms of seven or eight quite simple words. We've classified thousands of distinguishable phenomena into each of those huge categories. These are not the only categories language has, however, these categories of synonymity. It also has hierarchical categories, which a child learns quite early. For the young child, buttercup and flower are at first two names for the same thing. But quite early, it becomes clear that flower is hierarchically at a different level from buttercup; that both buttercups and daisies (although they're not daisies and buttercups) are both flowers. Then there is the relation of oppositeness, which we also learn very early in language. Light and dark, and light and heavy. Such pairs are not random associations, they are a part of the structure of language. We use them systematically: so that I may ordinarily ask, "How heavy is your suitcase?" but I don't ordinarily ask, "How light is your suitcase?" The words light and heavy are a pair, operating according to rules. And then, of course, there are the grammatical relations, in which, by formal distinctions in language, we can reflect some of the forms that we perceive or conceive of in our experiences. So, summing that up, language provides us with a grid, and we place this grid upon experience in order to reduce its irreducible nature, in order to make order out of the uniqueness of every phenomenon.

All our experience is so saturated with verbalism that we find it difficult to stand back from language and see it operating. Let me, therefore, take a very crude example. Here is a 9 year old girl in a Yorkshire school, a girl called Christine, writing about her family:

My Brothers

My brothers names are called Bert and John. On Monday my brother Bert was watching Wagon Train on the

television. My brothers and I are off school with very bad colds. While Bert was watching the television, he had a tiddlywink in his hand, and he put it up to his nose. Bert came across to mummy and told her what he'd done, and my mummy tried to reach it with her tweezers, but my brother was scared, and he sniffed, and the tiddlywink vanished out of sight. Daddy was putting his coat on by this time to take Bert to our doctor, who's called Dr. Fine. I was scared, and I cried, because I thought it might do some harm. My brother John just sat there watching TV. Besides, it was my tiddlywink out of my game. Doctor Fine got it out with tweezers. He came home all right, still I never got my tiddlywink.

I think the miracle by which we can get into the mind of a small child a long way away is difficult for us to comment upon, but at the crude level, I think we can feel the shape of that experience--the tug of war between the good little girl who cares about her brother, and the understandable little girl who cares about her tiddlywink. I am not suggesting that this is evidence that that child has perceived the shape. I want to suggest more than that. That this is, in fact, the act of perceiving the shape for her. The shape was perceived, as far as she will perceive it, as she wrote those words.

We use language, then, to structure experience, to give shape to experience. I like "structure" better than "give shape", because structure as a noun has two senses; it means the shape we find in things, and also the shape we give to things. And I want those two uses to be imported into the verb. When I say "we structure experience", I want that to refer both to the shape we give and the shape we find. These are, as you'll see, the processes of projection and introjection, which I started with.

Linguists sometimes distinguish two general categories of speech, the first being speech used as an exchangeable component of behavior, one of the counters of behavior. If I say to you, "Lend me a dollar," (to take an example from Sapir) you may reply by action, or action and words, or words. And, in any case, structurally (not <u>functionally</u>, because I may in one case have the dollar and not in the other), structurally the various kinds of response are similar. Language and action are substituting for each other. The other category is one that is sometimes called "displaced speech", and this is language used to <u>go back over</u> the event, and tell about it in the way I've told about it. In both these cases, we structure experience. We use language to marshall our energies, our attentions, to structure the situation, as we act in the situation. But it is a typical use of language and the one which I want to put the stress on, that we also structure experience by using language to go back over it.

Having said that, I want to make yet another and different distinction. Imagine a party. And the party is over. And you're discussing the behaviour of the guests, in order to try and work out who it might have been who lost a piece of jewelry in one of the chairs. You're doing something useful. You're taking part, in a very general way, in the world's work. I want to call that "participating" and your talk, language in the role of participant. But I'm sure you'll find as you do this that the talk drifts into another vein. You begin to discuss the behaviour of the guests in order to enjoy their behaviour, and to savour it in a way you couldn't when they were actually behaving. Now, this is not being useful to anybody, but it's very enjoyable. This I want to call language in the role of spectator. You are not now participating in the world's work in any way, you are in the role of spectator, going back over past experience. I may go back over my experience, either as participant or as spectator. I may tell you what has been happening to me in order to work up to asking you to lend me a dollar. If that is so, I am pursuing my own ends, and this is part of the world's work. I am a participant. Again, I may go back over my experiences in order to influence your decision about your own affairs. If action and decision are involved in it, that is participation. But I may go back over my experiences to enjoy them again and to invite you to enjoy them with me. And in that case, I'm in the role of spectator, and you, in responding to me, are also in the role of spectator--spectator of my past experience.

Let me illustrate this with a very fine point. You may take it or leave it. If it isn't helpful, leave it. A six year old, in an infant school, took a piece of brown chalk to his drawing book and scribbled all over one page very vigorously. And then at the bottom he wrote,

"Exploring the rocks,
a place called Cromer" (that's a very well known seaside holiday place).
"Exploring the rocks
a place called Cromer
I knocked the loose lumps of mud."

Well, the teacher liked that. But she liked it better when she had made a few "improvements"--just very small improvements, with her red pen. It became "Exploring the rocks at a placed called Cromer, I knocked the loose lumps of mud." Now, the fine point I want to make is to suggest that what the boy was really doing with his words was exactly what he was doing with his chalk. He was going back in order to gloat over his holiday, to enjoy it, and insofar as the teacher was concerned, it was saying to the teacher, "Here you are, you can share this pleasure with me." What the teacher made it into, was a piece of information. The boy then told anybody who wished to read it this piece of information about his holiday. In other words, as a way of informing,

this was language in a participant role, whereas it had been written in a spectator role.

You will notice that we have seen people taking up the role of spectator of other people's lives, something we habitually do, whenever we gossip to people, and also whenever we read fiction. We become spectators of other men's lives. We do this habitually, for fun: to gloat over an experience, to extend our experience, to speculate upon the shapes experience could take. We do it for fun, which means because we never cease to long for more lives than the one we've got. As participants we have one life to live; as spectators, an infinite number is open to us.

But we also do it for a different reason. And here I want to go back to the structuring process. You build your internal picture of the world and as you move to new experiences, you have to modify it in the light of the changes you encounter. If the changes are not too great, if what happens is not too unexpected, you will adjust in your stride. But if what happens is unexpected beyond a certain degree, either pleasantly or unpleasantly, then you may not be able to adjust in your stride. You have to participate as best you can because events don't wait for you. And when it is over, you are left in a state of mental indigestion. You need then to go back over the experience, in some form or other, in order to come to terms with it. We may do this in thinking, but nine times out of ten, at some stage or other, if we are able to, we do it in talking. And, of course, we sometimes do it in writing. Piaget shows that children use their make-believe play for a similar purpose. They go back over experiences which seem too difficult to accept, and play through them. Part of the play is talk about their experiences, of the kind I have been describing, talk in the role of spectator. Piaget calls this play a "dominance of assimilation over accommodation." Now in my cruder terms, this is simply a "domination of projection over introjection." In going back over events in order to come to terms with them, we are stressing our own inner need to project, to make the picture in the light of our own desires, what we can accept; and understressing the actuality of what was there.

To be in the role of spectator as opposed to participant is to be free from the need to act and to decide. I want now to suggest two ways in which, as spectators, we use the freedom given to us. We use it, in the first place, to attend to the forms of the language. And that means the linguistic forms themselves, the sounds, the rhythms, the structures. But also, the form of the events represented, and this is particularly important to us, of course, in the stories we tell and the stories we read. And thirdly, and perhaps most important, the form of the feelings, the patterns of feelings embodied and expressed. In participant situations, feeling usually moves directly into action--it

either sparks off action, or is eked out in anxiety. But as spectators we are free to savour it as feeling. And however miserable, or even threatening, or frightening you day's adventure may have been, you will enjoy those hairbreadth escapes in talking about them afterwards--in a way you certainly could not while you were a participant. Children respond to the sounds of language, the audible forms of language; a nice story was told at Dartmouth of the conference of psychologists, at the end of which one member was collected by his wife and small child. The small child danced through the room chanting to himself, "maximum capacity, maximum capacity." That they could also appreciate the shape of events at a quite early age is illustrated by the three year old who called Cinderella "a bit sad book about two ugly sisters and the girl they were ugly to."

Attention to forms then is one way in which we use this freedom. Secondly, we use it in order to evaluate experiences more amply than we are able to do as participants. We evaluate the situations that we participate in, and we act in the light of our evaluation. But we tend to do so under the urgency of practical necessity. As spectators, we are free to refer more fully, to a broad frame of reference. D. W. Harding, the English psychologist, has put this point. I quote his words: "Detached and distanced evaluation is sometimes sharper for avoiding the blurrings and bufferings that participant action brings. And the spectator often sees the event in a broader context than the participant can tolerate." And his conclusion to that is, "to obliterate the effects on the man of the occasions on which he was an onlooker, would be profoundly to alter his outlook and values."

Speech in the role of spectator then, may be make-believe play, improvised drama, (in which the speech has brought with it the action in which it originally took place, or is supposed to have taken place). When it is not so imbedded, I don't know what to call it: the nearest I can get to it is the word "gossip." We have done so little work on the social and educational functions of speech that we have no terms by which to distinguish good speech, desirable speech, from undesirable speech, and so on. When we go back over events, talking in the role of spectator, I want to call that "gossip," but using the word in a somewhat broader sense than normally, and intending a kind of talk that is not usually malicious. When we come to the written language in the role of spectator, I want to call that "literature." This is to define literature, in an unusual way, a non-normative way. In most of our definitions of literature we have to think of things being good enough to be literature, and so something which is not good enough to be literature is something else, but what it is nobody ever says. If I define literature as the written language in the role of spectator, this enables me to talk about the literature children write, as well as the literature children read. And those of you who have your university

courses still fresh in mind, may take the point that it enables us to treat literature as something we do, not simply something other people have done. So what poets write (taking poets just for the moment to stand for literature more generally), what poets write, and what children write perform a similar function. Their writings are valid for the same reason. They are both adjustments to, improvisations upon the writer's representation of the world. But now bring the reader in. When the reader reads what somebody else has written in the role of spectator, he has to make his adjustments to his own experience, his improvisations upon his own experience. And he does so in the terms that the writer has laid down. When I read what a child writes, I am less likely to find myself adjusting sharply my own experiences, than I am when I read what a poet writes. In other words, a child's poem is valid for the same reason as a poet's, but is less influential than a poet's poem. I want very briefly to add a word on this. The pattern of attitudes, beliefs, ways of feeling and behaving that forms an important part of our pattern of culture has been derived, above all, from the adjustments to experience, the improvisations upon their representations, made by the most sensitive adjustors in our society--by the artists. (We are talking of literature, so I'm thinking of the poets and the novelists, but it's obviously broader than this.) Our pattern of culture is in part derived from their adjustments and responses, but then only when we have given currency to those adjustments by our response to their works. And that's a very hurried way of saying that language in the role of spectator has a highly important cultural and educational function to perform.

Let us now turn to the way a young child acquires language. If we can form some conception of the purposes his language serves before he comes to school, we shall have surely the best starting point for anything we want to say about language in school. Listening comes first, but don't let us think of this as mere exposure. It is highly active and directed listening. The child is no more a pick-up than he is a camera. His first speaking is derived from the conversational exchange he has heard going on around him. He tends to say, in a situation, what has been said by somebody else in that situation. Thus, it is social interchange that he learns first. But very soon, as Vygotsky points out, he comes to use this social speech also for another purpose while at the same time going on developing his power to converse. He begins to use language, then, as a kind of running commentary on what he is doing, and this continues whether anyone is listening or not. Vygotsky calls this "speech for oneself," and shows how, as this is established, language begins to develop in two different forms. The social speech becomes more complex, more adequate. The speech for oneself becomes, first, more abbreviated: after all, if you're speaking for your own purposes, you don't need to tell yourself so much about it, you can leave the subject out, and maybe even leave part of the predicate out, too, and so on. Secondly, it becomes "individuated," using words with special, private

meanings. Finally, Vygotsky suggests that at about the age of six or seven, this abbreviated speech for oneself becomes internalized, silent. Further, that it is in fact going on still, in us, as verbal thinking. There is, of course, plenty of evidence to connect intelligence in its widest sense, in later life, with talking experience in infancy.

A child learns to speak not simply by imitation, but again (using this favourite word of mine) by improvisation. It soon becomes clear that he is applying a system. He doesn't know a system exists, and he's certainly never tried to learn it. But he is, in fact, acquiring it in the course of his speaking--a fact we can deduce by the errors he makes in applying it. I heard a small girl once say to her mother, "We better cross here, bettern't we?" If you know your Chomsky, you'll know that the transformations by which you derive that negative tag of "bettern't we," are very, very complex. Well, the child's got them dead right: it just happens that "better" isn't the kind of word that ought to be submitted to that particular transformation.

In the first year of speaking, speech remains mainly tied to the here and now; language about things present or actions going on. Then the child discovers the possibility of using words about things not present. And this is a tremendous extension of his powers to explore the world in language. He can then use what the Russians call "narrative speech," which is going back over experiences, shaping them, interpreting them. And "planning speech," which is putting the narrative into the future. And the Russians suggest that the child's ability to say what he is going to do is some influence in helping him to overcome distractions, and in fact, complete the plan. So there seems to be an important interpretative role in narrative speech, and an additional role, a regulatory role, in planning speech. To put this another way: when a child uses words instead of things, and not simply as attributes of things, he is able to place new experience alongside the old and familiar and so relate it, accommodate to it, understand it.

Two allied purposes are served by language at this pre-school stage. First of all, it serves the child's curiosity. Here I need to digress a little in order to talk about George Kelly. George Kelly is an American psychologist who fires me a good deal, but I don't find him talked about very much in educational circles. It seems to me that George Kelly's Psychology of Personal Constructs gives us the ideal background for all I've wanted to say, and a great deal more that educators talk about. His conception that man is, above all, a predictor, that he generates expectations, puts them to the test, and modifies them in the light of what happens--this gives us a model of man which makes all behaviour, basically, similar to learning behaviour. If throughout our waking lives we actively generate expectations, it is as though we were transmitting a carrier wave, and as though incoming messages

were modulations of that carrier wave when it meets the outside world. This is an active conception of living and learning. I have digressed, but not as fully perhaps as is necessary. Let me leave that as a matter for discussion. Meanwhile, I bring the point in now to explain that I assume the young child in ordinary circumstances is a curious animal; that it has curiosity, and that if language serves that curiosity, it will be felt by the child to be serving his purposes.

Secondly, obviously, a child uses language to build up relations with the rest of his family. And since the family is the whole theatre of operations for him, greater participation in the activities of the family provides a basic incentive for him.

When the child comes to school, it seems to me the least we can do is to make sure that his language goes on doing for him what it has done so far: and at all costs avoid anything in our behaviour which would bring discredit in his own eyes, in his own ears, upon his own speech. So the first important thing to decide about school is that the talk must go on. (I think future generations will condemn our system for this more than for anything else, that knowing something about the importance of talk, we nevertheless organize our timetable in such a way that we banish it into the crannies between other items.)

Further, talking and doing must go on together. Speech rooted in the here-and-now is still an important aspect of language development. If language is to have value as currency later on in handling second hand experience, secondary experience, it must, in these early stages, grow very firm roots in first hand experience: which means that talking and doing will be closely interlocked. I think the temptation to neglect this necessity is greatest in what is sometimes miscalled a knowledge subject. We have to bear in mind here that a child must formulate from bits of his own environment, in order to generate the hypothesis by which he can make something of what we can tell him. What we know, as has been pointed out, is often a great help to the child, and we must therefore tell him in the right circumstances; the right circumstances include that what we can give him fits into a framework that is already there for it. That framework consists of appropriate "expectations," and the generating of the expectations begins with the child trying to make something of what is there for him in the environment.

I think writing begins with what Sapir called the "expressive use of language," the verbal expression of the writer's own awareness--a kind of self verbalizing. But under different kinds of pressure, it moves out from that central position near to the self, either on the one hand to referential writing in the role of participant, or to poetic writing in the role of spectator. And I think that most of what we get in the

elementary school is, in fact, still transitional, still in the course of moving from the expressive towards the referential and towards the poetic. A great deal of learning is inhibited by teachers who don't know that if they cut off those expressive roots of language, they are short-circuiting the learning process.

A child's expressive, poetic writing in school leads on to literature. After all, if we define it as I have done, they are parts of one activity; the writing and the reading are there for the same reason. But of course this may not work. It may not work, because of the existence of sub-cultures, groups so culturally different from what it is we are offering in the way of written literature, that no contact can be made. I think, then, a teacher simply has to build up his own repertoire of what the children shall read, and it will be derived from what they have written, what other children have written, and from what people in their own group write. And as time goes on, he will hope to bring into this something from the wider context, the wider spectrum, where it is nearest to what is already built up there in the repertoire. This is becoming a more acute problem in England, but I can't claim it's a new one. I was very interested to find reference to it in a writing by Dover Wilson. You may know Dover Wilson as a Shakespearean critic--he certainly was a "literary gent," but he was also an Inspector of Schools. In 1921 he was criticizing another "literary gent" who was also an Inspector of Schools, Matthew Arnold, and he attacked Matthew Arnold's view of literature in these words: "Culture is not a hot house growth, an exotic plant, from which cuttings may be taken for the window boxes and back gardens of the less fortunate. Culture means cultivation--cultivation of the common soil of the human spirit, and the flower and fruit which spring from it grow naturally from that soil." This indicates a long term objective, raises all kinds of difficulties I can't solve, but that it's facing in the right direction, I have no doubt.

Surveying these activities, then, how do we select, how do we plan? You've heard it said a thousand times that children's interests must be the arbiter. Let's take a brief look at that. D. O. Hebb, the Canadian psychologist, has pointed out that what attracts our attention is likely to be something which has a familiar element, and an unfamiliar element. Piaget, in a very much narrower context, looking at what a small baby will imitate, finds that they will tend to imitate actions which have something familiar about them, and something unfamiliar about them. So what straddles the familiar the the unfamiliar will tend to attract attention. If we look at interests in that way, it is what <u>can</u> interest a child that concerns us and the restriction is on startint points, but not on destinations. The first implication is that teachers must have the freedom to choose how they structure the environment for the children, what materials they bring in. And the second implication

is that teachers must use that freedom to give children the freedom to choose amongst what is provided. Teaching is not laying siege and battering away from the outside; you must have a traitor within the gates who will open the door. (Herbert Kohl showed this magnificently in his Teaching the Unteachable.) If learning means going through a door, the door is only opened from the inside. And once it's opened, we depend upon the effectiveness of the learning processes in the child's own view. It in encouraging to think what a massive task an infant has accomplished when he has learned to speak. As I say, the family is the whole theatre of operations for the child, so that fuller participation in family affairs brings with it the whole "satisfaction of progress". Similarly, the use of language in school can bring this sense of satisfaction. It enters in to organize so many other kinds of activity, from the most mechanical manipulation of things to the making of myths: language spreads out the elements and enables us to make our own way with them. It is a cumulative process, a geometric progression. If we can get it started, the increase is rapid enough in most cases to give the child the sense that this learning process is worth opening the door for.

But of course there are problems in getting it started, because we're not always dealing with children who've come from ordinary situations. Ordinary curiosity may have been blunted, and apathy set in, or perhaps apathy sets in towards the school and what the teachers are interested in. Again, Herbert Kohl shows magnificently that it can be a tough job, but you can work for, and get, the break-through. And alternative theories based upon a body of knowledge and sufficient incentives, positive and negative, to get the body of knowledge learned, just don't hold water for me in this sort of situation. We can get away with them elsewhere because they can act as a priming of the pump, but they're just simply non-starters here. A body of knowledge is only of value as a frame of reference, a frame of reference is only of use to anybody if, in fact, he refers, if a process of referring goes on. And the process of referring only goes on if there is some activity afoot which demands the reference.

All I've said has implication for training because if we want teachers to educate children in this way, we have to educate teachers in this way also. I want to say a very little about training, and very briefly. A student teacher has two massive jobs on hand. The first is practical; he has to find his own way as a teacher, his own role, his own personality. Teachers, as you know, above all, have to be themselves. And the student has to find himself in order to be himself. This may involve a great deal of experiment, a great deal of patience on the part of those around him, a great deal of anxiety sometimes on his part. The second job is to put in some hard thinking and serious study. If we put before him material which has no intellectual challenge, we lose out from the start. But my main point

is to say these two tasks must be made one. He is not able to tackle educational theories until he has experience of educational practice, the confrontation of the classroom. He has to structure his environment, to make his own hypotheses, in order to match them up against the educational theories that people like ourselves proliferate.

I think all teachers need to know about language as a means of learning, as one of the things they understand about children. I think the college community must teach them this. Our own teaching must be mainly by talking, and the talking must not all be too studious, it must fringe off into more relaxed and more social talking. And it must fringe off also into active talking and doing, where the groups that have been talking with you will undertake some joint enterprise which brings other kinds of talking into play. The writing we ask for must be not only studious, but also personal. We need an openness between the generations, which comes when personal talking and writing are a part of the climate in which we live. And we need an environment of artifacts, just as the children had in the primary schools--to be surrounded with things that the children have produced, that we have produced, that the students have produced, seen in the same context.

I think teacher training has often suffered in the past by not having the right relations between the two branches of the profession. Students are tenants of our lasting relations with teachers in schools, and if we fail with the teachers, we fail with the students. I believe that the further education of experienced teachers ought to be closely related with the initial training of student teachers, because I believe the teaching situation, when it is rightly handled, becomes a way of setting up warm and egalitarian relationships, and not a way of inhibiting them. If I may be permitted to say so, I think it is difficult for the right relations to exist if teacher educators and teachers come through different routes, or from different stables. Where this is so, I think you need boxing and coxing. I think the educator of teachers needs the daily confrontation in the classroom, in order to have some things in his blood which can't be got by any other means; and in order to see educational perspectives from that viewpoint.

And that leads me to my very last point, which is to revert to language. And this is a disclaimer, if you like. There always will be a gap between anything we can formulate in language and the actuality of any situation. Eleanor Duckworth showed us this morning that there's a gap, there's a difference between believing and stating. There's a difference between response to a situation, and any formulation we might make of that situation in language. Confrontation involves responses we could not formulate, so that Piaget spoke of the present moment as "the manifold and irreducible present". If a sense of touch can be taken as an image of the fully sensitive response to a confrontation, then language is like the bones of the hand. It is the

bones of the hand, and the arm and the body, which enable touch to be delicately and deliberately applied. But touch is always far more than the impact of bone.

What I've been doing this morning is what I've found myself doing increasingly in recent years--trying to explain to myself what it is I feel and believe about language, and about children, and about learning. In this respect, it is the homespun philosophy, or the counterpart of the homespun philosophy I began with. And it is important, in thinking about language and learning, finally to come up against this disclaimer. Formulating a belief into a policy, and then acting on the formulation, may mean that we hide behind our formulation, and so refuse the responsibility that the actual confrontation presents. I have a magnificent, but long, quotation from George Kelly which puts that point rather better, but you've had to take my brief word in place of his.

THE EXPLORING CAT KITTENS

- Dawn Whipp
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1. Once upon a time there lived a little cat. He didn't have a name because he didn't have an owner. He lived in the junk yard near the lake, where he caught fish every day.

2. One day while he was catching fish a fish ran up to him and said, "Why do you eat us? Why can't you go out and try to find an owner?" So he did.

3. He went down Main Street and turned on South. There he found a fish store. He asked the clerk if he could have some fish. The clerk gave him some fish, and so the cat was satisfied. Next he washed himself real clean so somebody would think that he was just wandering outside for a little while. All of a sudden a dog came up behind him and scared the little kitty, so she climbed up a tree as fast as she could. The dog started barking at her real loud. Pretty soon he went away.

4. Just then the cat started to come down, and then he saw a squirrel. The squirrel said, "Why do you come up in the tree when you can be downstairs in that house drinking your milk?" "Because," said the kitty cat, "I was chased up the tree by a dog." "Well that's not where you should go, you should run right into your little house," said the squirrel. "Well, I don't have a house," said the kitty cat. "You don't?" said the squirrel so amazed. "No, I don't," said the kitty cat. "Well, then, go find one," said the squirrel. "That's what I was doing, until the dog chased me up the tree," said the kitty cat.

5. Well pretty soon they got that argument settled, and the cat went on. Pretty soon the cat met up with a little girl. The little girl said, "I've never seen you around this neighborhood before, you must be new. But I've never seen you in the pet-shop," said the little girl. Well, the kitty cat said, "I was just looking for a home." But before the little girl could say anything more, the kitty cat ran on, because she thought she wasn't very nice.

6. It was getting dark now, and the kitty cat thought he would like to settle down and take a nice long snooze. So he did. After night, when he was fast asleep, he heard a howling noise. So he looked up and all around but he didn't see a thing. So he tried to go back to sleep again. All of a sudden he heard the noise again. He looked up and

around all the way. The howling stopped, and the cat went back to sleep.

7. Next morning, when the cat woke he heard a tweeting noise. The cat looked up and there he saw a nice fat bird. The cat climbed up the tree very sneaky. But all of a sudden he stepped on the wrong branch and it fell. And the bird saw him. "Oh," he said. "I'll never be able to get my breakfast." Then he thought again. "How did I get my breakfast last night?" "Oh, yes, only one thing I could have ate for breakfast was fresh fish out of the water."

8. So he ran back to the lake as fast as he could. Then that very same fish came up to him and said, "I told you to go find a home and not eat us." The cat was very disappointed. So he turned down Main and went on to Washington Street. And went back to Main Street and turned on South Street and went into the fish store.

9. The clerk thought he might have been hungry, and he gave him some more fish, an extra fish to take along, just in case he got hungry again. The cat thought this was pretty good, so he dragged the extra fish just in case he got hungry again. All of a sudden he heard some dogs. The cat remembered what happened last time, and he didn't want it to happen again. So he turned the opposite direction of where the sound was coming from. But he went in the wrong direction and went to where the sound was coming from. And so he ran for the lake.

10. The cat asked the fish to hurry up and come up and tell these dogs not to chase him. So the fish did. When the dogs got there the fish said, "Why did you chase that cat around like that?" the fish asked. The dog said, "Because we want to eat him. Now keep out of our business!" But the fish said to that, "You can't eat kitty cats, just like a lion can't eat you." So the dogs thought they might not chase the cat anymore. They said "Oh! Bother!" to that. So the cat thanked the fish and went on.

11. Pretty soon it was lunch time. So the cat ate the extra fish that he got in the morning. After lunch, when he was cleaning himself clean, somebody came up behind him and said, "Now why don't you go and find your owner. Because you've been hanging around here all day." It was the same girl that he had met in the morning. And before she could say any more, the cat tore out of there so fast.

12. Pretty soon he caught up with a dog, the same dog that he had been chased by before. The dog said, "Have you ever heard talking fish?" The cat said, "Well, yet I have." And the dog said, "Where?" in an excited voice. "Down by the lake, of course," said the fish. So the dog tore down to the lake as fast as he could, and said to the fish, "Are you a talking fish?" "As a matter of fact I am," said the fish.

The dog said, "Can you say anything more than that?" "Of course," said the fish, as any human being could.

13. The dog said, "Can you say all the words in the world?" "I've got to know them all first," said the fish.

14. The dog said, "Well, I'll tell you some words, if you'll try to say them." "Well, tell me some then," said the fish. "Well, there's the word 'Hippopotamus,' and there's the word 'eye,' and there's the word 'there,' and there's the word 'maybe,' and there's the word--" "Oh," said the fish, "I know those all."

15. "You do," said the dog to me. "As a matter of fact, I do," said the fish. "Oh," said the dog. "As a matter of fact, I'd better be getting on," said the fish, "because I have to go to one of the fish meetings down below." "Can't you stay up here a little bit longer?" said the dog. "No," said the fish, in a pretty mad voice, "or else the sea lion will come and eat you." So the dog went away.

16. Meanwhile, the cat was walking around trying to find somebody that might want it. Pretty soon, a little baby came out of the house. The cat didn't go near her, because he knew that little babies didn't know how to treat cats, that sometimes little babies pulled their tails and ears, so the cat went the other way.

17. Pretty soon he came up to a lonesome boy on the doorstep. The boy looked up and saw the cat and thought what a nice pet it would be. He ran towards the pet, and when he got there, he started petting it. The cat thought he was kind of nice, so he thought, "Maybe this could be my owner." Pretty soon the cat was going there every day. And the boy was beginning to like the cat even more, and the cat was beginning to like the boy even more.

18. One day after school the boy asked his mom if he could have this cat. She said, "You'll have to ask your father." So he did. His father said he could have the cat <u>if</u>--if he fed the cat and fed her in the evening and in the morning and in the afternoon and took care of her real good and cleaned out her kitty box he could have her.

19. Well, that day he started saving up his allowance for the cat food, because he had to buy all the stuff.

20. He went down to Fred's Fish Store and got some fish for the cat, fresh fish, that is. The boy didn't know what to name the cat, but the color of his fur made him decide that the name should be "Star." And that's how Star got his name. Star was having fun with their catnip, and especially she had fun with their fish shaped catnip. Pretty soon she started staying inside and going outside every day. One day she

had four kittens. Now the boy really didn't know how many they were. But after a while he saw there were four. He named one of them White Paws, one of them Black Paws. And the other one Whitey and the other one Blacky. Blacky and Black Paws had the most fun of all, because they had their mama's fish shaped catnip.

21. Whitey and White Paws had just about the same amount of fun because they had the mouse shaped catnip. Star was having fun with her kittens because she thought it was fun to play with them.

22. One day she took them out for a walk. It didn't seem like a walk to Star, because they were kind of exploring more than walking. First they ran around the porch, then one of them discovered the looks of the stairs, and tried to go down them. He made it to the first stair, but not the second. Whitey came along to see if he could get down the stairs. He made it to the first one, and he made it to the second one, but not the third one. Pretty soon Black Paws came. He made it to the first one, and the second one, but not the third one. Now White Paws came to the stairs, and he made it down the first one, and the second one, and the third one, but didn't make it to the fourth. Meanwhile Blackie was having trouble getting down to the second stairs. He made it down the second stairs finally; all the little kittens started to congratulate him.

23. Pretty soon Blackie tumbled way down to the fourth stairs. Whitey came after him. So did White Paws. And so did Black Paws. Pretty soon all of them were all on the fourth stairs. All of a sudden one of them jumped down to the fifth stairs, and that was the end of that kitty to go down the stairs. Pretty soon all of them were at the end of the stairs. So they started their little walk.

24. One of them explored the tree, another explored the bush, and got hurt by the prickle, one of them explored what the bottom of the stairs looked like. And the last one explored the sidewalk. The one that explored the sidewalk kind of looked down and followed. Star pretty soon found out about it and started to run after him. Now Black Paws, the one that was exploring the side of the stairs, he was having fun, because there was a termite on it. He kept pawing the termite but he missed him all the time. Pretty soon he followed him to the tree and ran into the other kitty. Then the two kitties they started chasing each others' tail. The third one came in and interfered because he wanted to have fun too like that, so they let him in. Pretty soon they all got tuckered out and went back to their mom because they told her they wanted to go to bed now. So they did. All of them went to sleep but one. And that was Blackie.

25. He wanted to explore the termite again, so he went outside

and down all the stairs, very quietly, at least to him, and got to the end of the stairs and explored another termite. He followed the termite all over the place, and pretty soon he bumped into the stairs. And then he bumped into the tree. Then he went up the stairs, and fell down them again. He thought he was getting tired of looking at the stairs, and so he turned away from them as if he never wanted to see them again. He thought he'd better get back a napping before his mama woke up. But Star was woke up and she was out looking for him. She finally found him as he pounced on one of the kittens and woke him up. That got all of the kittens into a big playful fight. They were all pouncing all over everybody.

26. Pretty soon Star thought she better take him outside, because they were getting too rough in the house. So she did.

27. They were having more fun than ever outside, they stayed that way until lunchtime. When lunchtime came, Tommy, their master, fed them. They had nice fresh fish. And a little bit of canned cat food.

28. After lunch, the kittens thought it would be best if they went outside and took their nap because they liked it out there best. So they did. All of them went to sleep except Star. She wanted to keep an eye on Blackie, because last time he wandered off.

29. Well, she found out they were all tired, and they all went to sleep, so she did too. And slept all that time until supper. That's when they got all hungry. So Tommy fed them nice fresh tuna, right out of the can. The cats liked that so much, they wandered around until he gave them another dish of it. They got their second dish, so they were satisfied and went outside, because they were having fun exploring.

30. This time their mother told them they better follow her or they might get lost. So the kittens followed her. They followed her way down main street, and on to Washington. Pretty soon the kittens got tired of walking, so they ran. Pretty soon they were getting all tired.

31. So they went back home and went to sleep. That is for only about five minutes. Because they weren't too tired, really. They remembered they had just finished supper, so they went to sleep again, until morning.

32. Before Mrs. Stevens went to bed, she cleaned up the whole kitchen and living room.

33. The next day was the day they went to a parade, so the

kittens thought they might have some fun. They got into the cookie jar and spilled it all over, all of the cookies were all around. Next they got into the bread box. Oh did they have fun eating off all the bread. Next they went into the dining room, and knocked everything off Mrs. Stevens' desk. Then they went into the living room and knocked over the ash tray. Then they went upstairs into the bedroom, and scratched up the quilts. About an hour later, they thought they might as well go to sleep. So they did.

34. When the Stevens came home and saw the house, they thought, "Such kittens!" But when they saw them sleeping, they thought, "No they couldn't have done that, the wind must have did it." The kittens were all puckered out when they woke up. They fell off the bed because they were so gloomy. Then they thought it was fun falling off the bed, so they kept falling off the bed, until one of them fell and hit the door.

35. Star closed the door to see how smart the kittens were. She wanted to see if they could open the door. The kittens wondered how to open the door, because they had never tried it before. One of them found out how to open the door with the doorknob, so he jumped up and turned it and the door opened. Then the kittens all scampered down stairs, kind of fast, because they all tumbled. When they got down stairs, Tommy said, "There they are, all ready for their supper." This time they had canned catfood, they liked that better than fish, especially Star, because she was getting kind of sick of fish.

36. When they went to sleep, that is, when Star went to sleep, all the kittens went down stairs and started to play; when they saw it was dark outside they thought that maybe they should explore the couch, because it was kind of dark out. When they finished exploring the couch, they went into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator door somehow to see if there was any canned catfood left. There was, so Star reached up and pulled it out. She pulled out the top with her teeth, and kind of scraped out some of it into the dish, and they all started to eat.

37. Pretty soon they all got tired and went upstairs and back to sleep.

38. That night Star went out to the lake to see if she could get the fish again, the talking fish, that is. She went and asked the talking fish where the beginning was and where the end was. The fish said, "The end is at the end, and the beginning is at the start..." "Where are we now in the story?" said Star to the fish. "I think we're at the end, don't you?" "I guess so," said Star, "if that's what you think." "Well, I guess it is." So I guess it's the end of the story.

The end.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S WRITING

- Les Whipp
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When one insists on correcting student papers, or when one argues for teaching, however covertly, mechanics or organization or usage or correctness--one is likely to justify it by saying something like "How else is the child ever going to attain clear self-expression?" or "Students don't know how to express themselves." Or "I'm seeking to help the student learn to communicate his ideas effectively." Or "Someday they're going to have to know how to express themselves in formal English--they can't always get by with the vague and sloppy and meaningless sort of language they naturally use."

That is, the rhetoric of self-expression and communication is used to justify practices which in all probability impede self-expression and are irrelevant to communication. This curious contradiction of ostensible purpose and probable effect is not at all unusual, of course, in language about language. You can easily recall essays on style which begin with the notion that style in language use is something individual and unique to each writer's use of language and which end by urging a single style, and this, of course, is simply a more sophisticated version of correctness teaching. The pervasiveness of the contradiction reflects a problem: "Well, what is the alternative to the teaching of 'correctness'?"

One alternative is simply to respond to the student's use of writing in the way that the child's first language teacher, the mother, does to the child's use of speech. In speaking of the mother as the child's first language teacher, I do not intend anything which most mothers would think of as teaching the child language, that is, for the most part, misguided vocabulary drill. Instead I am thinking of something like this: when the child uses /baba/ to mean "I want it," the mother either gives "it" to the child, or gets a substitute, or denies the child. In short, the mother uses the language, the mother understands, comprehends, perceives what the language is doing for the child, and works with it at that level.

One incontrovertible fact about that initial language learning situation: it works, kids do learn to speak and learn with remarkable efficiency a system of immense complexity. Now, if one sought to structure the classroom language-learning situation analogously to such early language-learning situations, what would be analogous to the mother using the child's language? What would the analogy be in working with composition? What is understanding, perception,

comprehension on the part of the adult when he gets a piece of writing from the child?

In answer, as an illustration, I want to make some comments about a story my daughter recently composed, a story which she entitled "The Exploring Cat Kittens." My daughter was then nine years old, and the story was dictated to me, a sentence at a time, with pauses between the sentences just long enough for me to keep up in typing. Since I was typing the dictation, the spelling, punctuation, and sentence boundaries are mine. She, however, subsequently supplied the paragraph boundaries.

I use this story as an example, despite the fact that it was composed by my own daughter, partially because the kinds of features which I can comment on in her story are in fact largely independent of my personal knowledge of her, and are for the most part easily generalizable. Both the linguistic and the psychological development of children are developmental, and the close analysis of the behavior of a single child can thus give us insights into the behavior of many children. Partially, though, I use this story as an example because it struck me as having interesting deficiencies; again and again I found myself initially making negative judgments of it, and then coming to reverse those judgments. When I began to understand the story (not until I had finished typing it, and reading it, and had begun to analyze it) I saw that it was much less deficient than I had first thought it. (The story appears on pp. 69-74 above, and might usefully be read before my analysis of it.)

I want to consider the story from two perspectives, first from a formal perspective, second from a functional perspective: that is, first, story as artifact, observing some of the syntactic and narrative features of the story, and the relationships between parts of the narrative, and, second, story as fantasy, story as dream, or story as projection, seeking to identify the narrative in the fantasy life of the child. And finally I will seek to rephrase these considerations in terms of the original question "What is it like for a writing teacher to respond to the student's use of imaginative language in the way that the child's first language teacher does to the child's use of speech?" (Throughout each of these three sections--the discussion of the formal features, the discussion of their psychological functions, and the applications of these discussions to writing pedagogy--throughout each section I am repeatedly struck by my own ignorance of children's language and language development, and hence come repeatedly to phrase questions which you and I and many others might ultimately hope to get answers for, once we have recognized that there is an immense amount to be learned from the study of children's language.

Formal Perspective

My least fruitful observations of form concern the syntax. Although I have not yet made a rigorous analysis of the syntax of this story, a couple of items did pop out at me, two features which I have not observed before in Dawn's stories, but which are conventional in the genre. Both are illustrated in the following quotation from paragraph 15:

> "No," said the fish, in a pretty loud voice, "or else the sea lion will come and eat you."

The first feature is the qualifier of the verb, "in a pretty loud voice;" this kind of descriptive detail, qualification of manner, occurs three times in this story, and is the only kind of descriptive detail to appear. Is it perhaps significant that the descriptive detail which does occur is incidental qualification of action rather than of things or places or time? Is it the case that in children's acquisition of such conventions in imaginative language there is a developmental sequence in the kinds of qualifiers added? In time, by careful observation, perhaps we will eventually find out about such matters.

The second feature, the second significant innovation, in Dawn's construction of the sentence just cited, is the insertion of the character description in the middle of the direct quotation; she can now shift the perspective of the fish speaking to the dog, to the perspective of the author speaking to the reader, and back again to the perspective of the fish speaking to the dog. In this matter I am reasonably sure there is a developmental sequence, although I do not yet have the data to demonstrate it.

Much more significant, though, is the narrative structure of the story. It can be summarized in this little scheme:

quest (par. 1-8)
- initial success (food-adult) (par. 1-3)
- attack (dog) (par. 3-4)
- possible resolution (girl) (par. 5)
- defeat (return to lake) (par. 6-8)

quest (par. 9-16)
- initial success (food-adult) (par. 9)
- attack (dog) (par. 9-15)
- possible resolution (baby) (par. 16)
- no defeat, though no success either (par. 16)

quest (par. 17-38)
- possible resolution (boy) (par. 17)
- resolution (finds a home, name, food) (par. 18-20)
- resolution elaborated (security) (par. 21-38)

(To get this elegant outline, I had to make another lengthy, inelegant, topic outline of the events in the story; in the course of making the longer, less elegant list of topics, repetitions and patterns emerged, on the basis of which I simplified the original list until it took this shape.)

As a story pattern, the outline shows the story to have far more cohesiveness than I thought it had when I first heard it and when I first read it, too, for that matter, and to make use much more clearly of narrative conventions than I thought it did, as well. Four conventions are especially important. The first of these is the use of the quest as the basic structural device of the narrative, the departure from home in search of a new home as in Little Red Riding Hood, or the Odyssey. The fact that the quest is for a home, that the main character in a sense doesn't have a home, should not obscure the fact that initially in a sense he does have a home: he lives in a junk yard by the lake, and the junk yard and the lake are his home. He leaves it and goes out into the big world to find another home, presumably a better one.

The second significant narrative convention is the occurrence of the threes, as in Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Three Billy Goats Gruff, and The Three Little Pigs. The triplet in Dawn's story is comprised of three people who might serve as owners for the cat, the three possible masters--the girl, the baby, and the boy. Further, the three form a progressive and cumulative sequence: the girl occurs with flight, defeat, and return to the lake, the baby with flight, but with no defeat, and no return to the lake, and the boy with no defeat, no flight, and no return to the lake.

The third significant narrative convention is the use of foreshadowing devices, the malign dog and the benign adult, the clerk. As one reads the story initially, I think he can regard the dog episode only as a needlessly repeated digression. But once one lays out the story in outline, quite another possibility occurs; the attacks of the dog occur with both the benign adult and with the unsatisfactory possible masters. As a narrative device, that is, the benign adult foreshadows success, the ability of the cat ultimately to make it to succeed in the real world, and the malign dog foreshadows immediate failure to make it. And the threat of the dog decreases each time it appears. Thus it is significant that the third time the dog enters (Par. 14), he challenges the fish at some length, and is bested by the fish, that magical talking fish, who both initiates the quest and terminates the story itself. The dog's force is negated, his teeth are pulled, finally, by the verbal superiority of the magical fish (and the mysterious authority of the sea lion).

The fourth, and last convention which I have recognized is the use of a frame for the narrative, a frame comprised of the repetition of a single motif, a convention common to many, many kinds of writing;

it occurs, for example, in Wordsworth's Michael, in Keats's Eve of St. Agnes, in many of the book review essays in the New York Times Book Review Magazine, and, in fact, in some of the other essays included in the present collection, as well as in many, many poems and stories written for children. Dawn constructs her frame from the second sentence in the first paragraph ("He didn't have a name because he didn't have an owner.") and the second sentence of the twentieth paragraph ("The boy didn't know what to name the cat, but the color of his fur made him decide that the name should be 'Star.'") The frame brackets the quest, occurring just before and just after the narrative of the quest itself, signalling, as it were, the beginning and the end of the quest narrative.

This frame, of course, in fact, does not end the story, although its presence may account for the adult reader's sense that the story should end. To end the story, Dawn uses a second set of brackets, the first part of which begins in the second paragraph: "a fish ran up to him and said..." And the last part of which occupies the last paragraph: "That night Star went out to the lake to see if she could get the fish again, the talking fish, that is." Dawn has a double pair of brackets, then, clearly showing a generative awareness of the frame convention, although the frames are not aligned yet, showing, perhaps, some awkwardness in her control of that generative capacity.

Of course by now I'm telling parts of the story Dawn didn't tell, and that may be the most significant feature of the analysis--how latent, how implicit, how buried it demonstrates the connections to be. Perhaps as Dawn develops as a story teller (and perhaps as kids generally develop as story tellers) she and they do so by coming more and more to making the implicit explicit. She may come, for example, to number the three characters to relate them and to build the sense of anticipation, to describe them in terms of analogous attributes or speech, to provide ritualistic and repeated elements of conversation, to pattern their appearances with a time scheme (first day, second day, third day), to pattern benign appearances with fair weather and early morning, malign with foul weather and darkness. And she may come to use devices other than episodes or sub-plots (store clerk episodes and dog episodes) to provide the anticipatory overtones for the main elements of the plot.

But Dawn hasn't yet come to use these devices and conventions. This in part accounts for an adult reader's sense that the story has no direction, no structure, the absence of the clear and overt markers. But the structure is there; though the symbols are missing, the reality is there if only one has faith, hope, and charity enough to look for it, if only one grants the author that fundamental language courtesy.

The fact, though, is that I found the story in the telling and in the first reading a bit of a drag after the paragraph in which Star got her name. It went on too long. And from purely formal considerations, I think any adult reader would feel the same way. The formal considerations are not, though, the only ones we can bring to bear. Thus I'd like to move now from looking at the progress Dawn is making in picking up conventions of story writing to looking at the way in which Dawn is using the fiction to speak of real and vital and troublesome experience.

Functional Perspective

Perhaps the most troublesome feature of the narrative structure was the ballooning of the demonstration of the security of the new found home. Partly this ballooning is to be explained, I think, by the way in which the fiction works psychologically for Dawn. In part it is also true that the ballooning is a result of Dawn's delight in sheer length. Although she ostensibly began to try to find a way of ending about three fourths of the way through, she exclaimed when the story spilled over on the last page, "Oh, good! It made eight pages." But given the fact that we do have filler here, one is still obliged to ask, "Is the filler meaningful?" or "Is any psychological function served by what is said in the filler?" And I think one can answer affirmatively, once some other details are observed.

First, the main character, Star, the cat, after leaving home, the lake and junk yard, encounters first of all a fish clerk--an adult with an identifiable adult role, but a vocational role, not a domestic role, in a place of business, not in a home, not in the sort of place that might serve to satisfy as the object of the quest. (In fact, when I was first listening to the story, I expected that the fish market might indeed be a possible home for the fish, but this possibility just didn't occur to Dawn at all.)

Second, the figures who might serve as masters are a girl and a baby, both of whom are (surprisingly) hostile figures; the little girl telling the story, Dawn, in no way identifies with the little girl in the story, for Dawn is a little girl who gives a great deal of affection and attention to her own pet cat. And the fact is that Dawn frequently feels it necessary to rescue the cat from torment inflicted by her brothers! Third, the figure who does serve as a master is a little boy, a male, a lonely little boy. Fourth, the cat, upon obtaining a home, gets pregnant, bears kittens and cares for them with vigilance, patience, wisdom, and amazing skill: she assures that they, unlike her, have names from birth, she watches over them to see that they don't wander away, she encourages their learning by exploration, she imposes restrictions (the walk), but does not punish, and she even manages to open a refrigerator door and serve the little ones some canned catfood. Finally, the cat is at the end identified with the story teller, Dawn: Dawn has a problem--how to

end the story, and the cat solves it by presenting it to the fish, as if it were her own, as of course in a sense it is, insofar as Dawn and Star (both monosyllables associated with the sky). Characteristically, elementary children do identify with the main character of their narrative fictions, and very often they make the identification explicit, often, as here, toward the latter part of the story. In this case, of course, there is the problem of the shifting pronouns: the cat sometimes is a "he," sometimes a "she." And when Dawn revised the story (which she did slightly: raising in my mind the question, what kind of revisions or editing do kids come to at what points in their language development?), the inconsistency in pronoun gender didn't bother her. This too, of course, is a frequent feature of the writing of children in elementary school. And I don't know what to say about it as a general feature, except to say that kids take longer than we might assume to come to adult circumspection in the consistent use of gender in pronouns. Perhaps it has to do with the way in which their fictions, the representation and resolutions of difficult emotions, permit a gradually increasing identification of character and narrator. In this particular case it's clear that the sexual character of the protagonist is increasingly like that of the story teller, and ultimately the protagonist indubitably proves to be of the same sex as the story teller. I'll come back to that in a moment.

Now I want to rephrase just those fictional features in terms of a child's experience, specifically Dawn's. She knows that at some point she must leave home and enter the adult world, a world in which there are both benign and malign forces, a world in which very few of the meaningful exercises of power and expertise and competence are visible to a child, a world of which it is extremely difficult to know how most people (except for a few, like teachers, policemen, firemen, and grocery store clerks) get their daily bread. She does not know whether she can successfully enter this world, can successfully cope with the negative forces, the dogs in this world. Return to the junk yard and the lake will be impossible; however much she may desire such a return, she knows that there is coming the time when she can't go home again. Instead, she has to learn to operate in a complex technological culture, not one in which you catch a fish from a lake, but one in which you open a refrigerator door, open a tin can, and kind of scrape out some canned food.

Further, one adult role open to her is partially identifiable, far more so than for her brothers. She can marry and bear and raise children. She can't form a home with the old male, with the girl or with the baby; she can only do this with a boy, a lonely boy. In the fiction she successfully enters the adult world, the technological culture, forms a stable home and raises her family: but her children, unlike her, have names from the day they are born. In short, the fiction is a representation, statement and resolution of some of the anxieties she has about growing up.

Now there are several other things working which I am much less confident about. The naming business itself is probably highly significant. Dawn has long had a compulsion for scrawling her name in the most unlikely places, as well as in likely places, especially when she felt indignation or anger--with her finger in the frost on the window, with a pencil on the inside of a book cover, with a crayon on the back of her brother's sweater, with a straight pin on the ash tray of a neighbor's car. But of course one often sees this in young children. And as Ralph Ellison has suggested, such behavior is very purposive indeed:

> Without doubt, even the most engagé writer--and I refer to true artists, not to artist manqués--begin their career in play and puzzlement, in dreaming over the details of the world in which they become conscious of themselves.
>
> Let Tar Baby, that enigmatic figure from Negro folklore, stand for the world. He leans, black and gleaming, against the wall of life utterly noncommittal under scrutiny, our questioning, starkly unmoving before our naive attempts at intimidation. Then we touch him playfully and before we can say Sonny Liston! we find ourselves stuck. Our playful investigations become a labor, a fearful struggle, an agon. Slowly we perceive that our task is to learn the proper way of freeing ourselves to develop, in other words, technique.
>
> Sensing this, we give him our sharpest attention, we question him carefully, we struggle with more subtlety; while he, in his silent way, holds on, demanding that we perceive the necessity of calling him by his true name as the price of our freedom. It is unfortunate that he has so many, many "true names"--all spelling chaos; and in order to discover even one of these we must first come into the possession of our names. For it is through our names that we first place ourselves in the world. Our names, being the gift of others, must be made our own.
>
> Once while listening to the play of a two-year-old girl who did not know she was under observation, I heard her saying over and over again, at first with questioning and then with sounds of growing satisfaction, "I am Mimi Livisay?...I am Mimi Livisay. I am Mimi Livisay... I am Mimi Li-vi-say! I am Mimi..."
>
> And indeed and in fact she was--or became so soon thereafter, by working playfully to establish the unity between herself and her name.

> For many of us this is far from easy. We must learn to wear our names within all the noise and confusion of the environment in which we find ourselves; make them the center of all our associations with the world, with man and with nature. We must charge them with all our emotions, our hopes, hates, loves, aspirations. They must become our masks and our shields and the containers of all those values and traditions which we learn and/or imagine as being the meaning of our familial past.[1]

"For it is through our names that we first place ourselves in the world." And partly what Dawn is up to in this story is placing herself in this world, that's what the story is about, exploring, and establishing her personal identity in relation to the things around and in front of her.

The title of the story, Dawn's own title, is in this connection significant, "The Exploring Cat Kittens." My initial response to the title was negative. It didn't make sense. How was one to understand it? As opposed to "horse-kittens" maybe? But of course it makes excellent sense, coalescing into a single noun phrase the separate identities in the story who are in fact the single identity of the story-teller herself. She is the exploring cat kittens, but before she can as the kittens come into possession of all of the names of the enigmatic Tar-Baby, she must first like the cat come into the possession of her own name, her own identity, her own selfhood.

In part it is also likely that she is exploring not simply her selfhood, but also her feminine selfhood, coming to terms with her own sexuality. It is the case that in the course of the quest narrative, the main character, Star, does grow from a sexually neuter character, designated "he," to a fulfilled feminine character, a woman. And the quest does end, as it were, in a marriage, meeting a lonely boy, coming to live with him, and to bear young. And finally there is that threatening dog, a common symbol for feared male sexuality in fantasy, a decreasing threat which does not come in at all in the relation of the cat to the lonely boy.[2]

Another curious feature of the story is the part played by the magical talking fish, and the mysterious sea lion whose awful power gives the talking fish his authority. The talking fish clearly is associated with the cat's source of nourishment until its departure from the early home, the lake and junk yard. And the talking fish does initiate the quest, sending the cat forth from its early home, and denying the possibility of its return. Finally, the fish is a benevolent protective power, one the cat relies on even being sent out into the big world. It seems most likely that the fish is a kind of authority figure, specifically a father figure. And in fact her father is rather more loquacious than energetic, given somewhat to displays of polysyllabics.

Behind this figure, though, lurks unseen a still more powerful figure, but again one who exerts his power in benevolent ways to secure justice, protect the weak, and--convene fish meetings. As it happens, there is an adult male in her experience who is remarkably like a sea lion, Paul Olson, formerly my teacher, from whom I acquired several of my most prized expressions ("tropological," "anti-type," "practicum," and "common profit") and presently my boss, who convenes the various fish meetings I have to attend, and who moreover in his verbal play with children, and with Dawn, has frequently been observed to say, "...or I'll eat you up!"

The precise identification of the elements of experience upon which Dawn has drawn, though, in creating these authority figures is much less important, much less significant, than the nature of the authority figures themselves, the nature of the power which they exercise, and the means and ends for which they exercise it. The authority figures are benevolent figures, and the ends for which they exercise their power ultimately are protective and fulfilling ends. They use their power to oppose and to defeat the hostile, aggressive forces in her experience. And this suggests a good deal about her view of the world at the time of the story. Generally it seems likely that the nature and ends of the authority figures in children's writing are extremely revealing, though often not as benevolent as in this case.

In this connection, I am struck by the transgressions of authority which occur in paragraphs 31-34; after the first sentence in paragraph 30, I asked Dawn if the story were coming to an end pretty soon. Although she responded in the affirmative, indicating that she recognized that I wanted her to end it, still it was obvious that she had not in fact been thinking of ending it. And I take it that in part the violence, and the successful breaking of the rules of behavior which is the stuff of the immediately succeeding paragraphs, is in part a way of handling her resentment of my trying to impose my rule on her. It seems likely, that is, that elements of the story do embody the story-teller's responses to immediate experience, as well as ways of dealing with more profound, complex, and troubling levels of experience.

In any case, though there is much that one cannot grasp of the particulars of the relationship of the fiction to Dawn's psychology, there is much that comes clear from a close examination of the story, from taking it seriously, from <u>hearing</u> it. And since the story can be seen to work with the child's anxieties until the quest is fulfilled, it seems likely that the last third of the story works similarly: the elaboration of the details of the security make it clear that the story is not simply about a cat finding a home, that the story is about how a girl assumes an adult role in a complex society; the kittens and the canned catfood and the refrigerator are as important and functional at this level as the tripartite division of the quest.

Pedagogical Application

One thing remains, to make explicit what has so far been only implicit: what teacher response is analogous to the mother's giving the child the rattle when he says /baba/?

I want to begin negatively. What I have been observing in this story are features and uses of narrative writing which few teachers and fewer texts prescribe, or could prescribe, for that matter. The child obviously has NOT acquired them from having any teacher point them out to her. Any teacher-talk which tells the child what the language is like or how she can or should express herself would not have told her about these features and uses. And I would go further and say that (1) any teacher-talk which did tell her about these features would not have helped her to acquire their use and (2) that any features important to acquire would not have been described by any teacher-talk. In short, what teachers know how to spell out to the child isn't important and even if it were, spelling it out probably wouldn't help; we don't learn to use language by having someone conceptualize to us about it. Any sort of talk about the language to the child is instead analogous to the misguided vocabulary drill which most parents would single out as "teaching the language." In both situations--the situation of the parent and the child and the situation of the teacher and child--"teaching the language" normally is irrelevant to "learning the language."

Well, what then is the positive part of the analogy between mother and teacher as facilitation of child language-learning?

Perhaps the most significant thing is to believe that the language is meaningful, to pass what child-lore scholars speak of as "the triviality barrier," the belief that children's activities are merely childish, the tendency to put away childish things. This is most difficult to do. Our culture tends to regard fiction and poetry and the life of the imagination generally as idle, frivolous, and trivial. Our schools have tended to teach kids how to do nothing with words, to produce writing which is really idle, frivolous, and trivial. And part of the repertory which we as teachers use to do this is an extensive rhetoric for affirming the importance of loving kids, of nurturing their individuality, of taking them seriously, a rhetoric which is substituted for taking kids seriously. Just as affirming love is often a way of concealing hate, and affirming the importance of an individual style is a way of recommending a single style, and saying "Coming" is a way of delaying coming, so affirming the sacred obligation to take the child seriously is a conventional way of not taking a child seriously. All three tendencies--the tendency to spout the rhetoric of belief, the tendency to encourage kids to use language to say nothing, and the tendency to regard imaginative language as frivolous--all three immensely complicate the already difficult task of regarding children's productions as meaningful, of

regarding them as not merely childish. For most adults that task is a very difficult problem indeed.

Is it for you? Well, at what point in my analysis of Dawn's story did you say to yourself, "Boy! He sure reads a lot into this story!"? At what point did you say, "Well, yes, but we do have to be careful not to read too much into the children's stuff, don't we?" If these responses occurred at all you have the problem. The mother, of course, doesn't. She regards the child's language as meaningful, at least operationally; whatever she might say about it, however embarrassed she might be in company about his childish babbling, still her responses to the child himself will by and large be to the intent and meaning of the child's babbling.

The first point in the analogy is to take the child's language seriously, as meaningful language. How do you do this?

Obviously the child cannot conceive in the abstractions I was using in discussing the psychological and rhetorical features of her story. She's telling a story, a story about a cat who has problems and who successfully solves them. And it's at that level that one must in response to the child take the language seriously. A guide to what this is like is what the child does when listening to a story, or when watching a television cartoon or drama. Sometimes this involves questions about the story, or even questions of what this word or that phrase means (stimulated by real, not phony, failure to understand). Usually, though, it involves intent listening (perhaps while coloring or whittling or cutting paper or playing tiddly winks, but still intent listening), with genuine, spontaneous laughter at the humor, and gloom at the sadness or loneliness or misfortune of the main characters, etc. These are the appropriate responses at the level at which Dawn is self-consciously using the language of her narrative.

She is unself-consciously using it in quite other ways, though, ways which the teacher should be aware of: first to extend her language facility; second, to cope with and express feelings. To say that she is self-consciously telling a story about a cat is simply to say that if you asked her what she was doing she could reply, "Telling a story about a cat." And to say that she is unself-consciously extending her language facility and expressing her emotions is simply to say that if you asked her what she was doing she could NOT reply that that was what she was doing, and furthermore if you told her, she wouldn't understand you. But your recognition as a teacher that she is doing these other things is what your taking her language seriously depends upon.

The second point then is that you perceive and understand far more about the child's utterance than (s)he does or could, first about the

child's acquisition of the features of the written language, second about the child's psychological use of the fiction.

Curiously we know very little in fact about language features or about the ways in which children acquire them. Scholarship on language features is extensive on subsentence relationships; it is extensive on critical theory and applied criticism of mature artistic language, although this work largely lacks the rigor and clarity of linguistics: twentieth century literary criticism is more analogous to fifteenth century grammar than to twentieth century linguistic scholarship. Of language generally, though, comparatively little is known or described about relationships beyond the sentence. What this seems to me to imply is that the most profitable way of spending time on compositions is by analyzing what kids write, learning what modes serve their fantasy life, or could serve it, what comprises syntactic competence and syntactic excellence and syntactic challenge, what sequence there is in the acquisition of modifiers, descriptive details, devices of characterization, what relationships or sequences of relationships appear between narrator and characters, etc.

There is in fact a mother who can serve as a model even here. Ruth Hirsch Weir, a Stanford linguist, who taped and transcribed and described the utterances which Baby Anthony Weir made when alone in his crib during the critical months that he was learning to speak. This work is published in an extremely important book entitled Language in the Crib (Mouton, 1962). Professor Weir, in this work is performing, of course, not as a mother, but as a linguist, so the analogy at this point is false, isn't it?

But the point remains: we don't know how to evaluate progress in children's acquisition of language because we don't know what it consists in. I suspect that's why we fall back on the trivial misinformation we peddle about spelling, punctuation, word choice, usage, paragraph development, organization, etc. We don't know where the real learning is appearing. It's not that hard to discover, though, once you set your mind to learning from the papers your kids write and forget about judging them. Most of what is there to be learned from the 9-year-old's story I've been working with is still latent in the story: what of the length of clauses, and number and kinds of phrases and clauses per sentence? What can a 9-year-old do here? What do 7- and 11-year-olds do? What range of variation occurs with grade level? What subordinating and coordinating conjunctions occur and in what uses? What lexical and syntactic features recur with indention? What paragraph signals is she working with? What connections between sentences? What narrative formulae? How does repetition come into children's writing, at what levels of language organization, and to serve what purposes? How do redundant elements come in to serve what purposes? Etc., etc., etc.

Even without answers to these questions, even without the analytical skills of a linguist or rhetorician, still, as teachers, you and I in our own classrooms can work with children's language in much the same way as the child's first language teacher does, taking it seriously, assuming it is significant, and seeking to respond appropriately to its significance. We can, with a slight redirection of our time and energies, use the language, understand, comprehend, perceive what the language is doing for the child, and work with it at that level. Perhaps then we will no longer feel compelled to "correctness" teaching.

Footnotes

1. Ralph Ellison, "Hidden Name and Complex Fate", Shadow and Act. (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 147-148.

2. Cf. Leonard Caligor and Rollo May, Dreams and Symbols: Man's Unconscious Language. (New York: Basic Book, Inc., Pub., 1968), p. 37, where Dr. May speaks of a "frequently seen sexual dream, with the man's sexuality viewed as hostile, dangerous. Man is a dog, and sex has teeth."

MORNING HAZE

- Les Whipp
University of Nebraska

My title comes from a delightful old haiku:

> Morning haze:
> as in a painting of a dream,
> men go their ways.
>
> Buson (1715-83),
> tr. H. G. Henderson[1]

Neither the subtitle nor the poem give much of a clue to the subject of these notes, though. As it happens, that subject is creative or imaginative writing in the schools.

That's not a very promising sort of subject, in fact. Not to sensible people, at least. "A field of corn and a bird in flight/These give sensible folk delight."[2] One certainly would not expect to find a field of corn and a bird in flight here. On second thought, perhaps one would. An essay on creative writing is very often "a field of corn," and an essayist on "creativity" often "a bird in flight." Essays on creative writing, in fact, are remarkably uncreative, essays on the nature and place of imaginative language singularly unimaginative, and the genre on the whole uninspired. If you read on, you must indeed have some serious interest in the teaching of creative writing. I'll try not to give you a field of corn and a bird in flight.

Instead I'll seek to argue a thesis. I want to argue that conventionally in talking about and thinking about and teaching creative writing, or "imaginative" language, we pursue the associations of "creative" or "imaginative" and ignore the associations of "writing" or "language." Further, I will argue, if one instead pursues the associations of "writing" and of "language," he will be led to some radically different teaching practices.

I propose to proceed initially by recalling what we know, that is, by examining the kinds of things we customarily say about "creative writing" or "imaginative language" in our classrooms, for by looking at the kind of language which frequently patterns with this familiar subject, we may make discoveries about the well-known notions of "creative writng" or "imaginative language."

One of the burning questions, or set of questions, which often recurs, and one which I suspect you expect me to try (and fail) to answer is this: "How do we stimulate or motivate kids to do imaginative or creative writing? How do we get them to turn on their imaginations? How do we get them to use their imaginations?" Now what interests me about these questions is not their answers. It is instead the language of the questions themselves. Notice what these questions assume. Notice what part of the phrases "creative writing" and "imaginative language" they hook into. They might logically hook into either one of two sets of expressions. They might hook into the expressions "creative" and "imaginative" or they might instead hook into the expressions "language" or "writing." Now the expressions "creative" or "imaginative," or related expressions such as "imagine," or "imagination" or "creativity" very often come into talk about mental faculties or abilities--particularly the faculty of the imagination. And the expressions "language" or "writing" often involve the notions of public conventions, shared systems of communication, and in a profound and complex sense, rule-governed behavior. Now what part of the phrases "imaginative language" and "creative writing" is it which this first set of conventional questions pursues?

"How do we stimulate or motivate kids to do imaginative or creative writing? How do we get them to turn on their imaginations? How do we get them to use their imaginations?"

These questions assume, do they not, that eliciting creative writing in the classroom is a matter of "turning on" a mental faculty, like "turning on" a hidden motor by remote control. They are looking for the stimulus, the motive, the electrical impulse which will turn this motor on. They are concerned with the process, and with the process conceived in a certain way, in terms of faculty psychology: "How do you get kids to use their imagination?"

What strikes me as important about this first set of questions, then, is this: they are concerned with mental events. They inquire about psychology. Further, they assume for their psychology a faculty psychology, not a Freudian psychology, not the terms of clinical or physiological or contemporary child psychology, but the terms of nineteenth century theoretical psychology. And these questions do not inquire about writing or language. They are concerned with process, not with product. They pursue the associations of "creative" or "imaginative," not the associations of "language" or "writing."

Here is a second set of questions which are also frequent in talk about creative writing: "Will not the use of models in teaching creative writing stifle the imagination? Will it not prevent the child from using his own imagination? Will it not hamper and kill creativity and individuality and spontaneity? Will it not impede the development of the child's own <u>style</u>?" Here again one observes that the questions pursue

the associations of "creative," not of "writing." And again one observes the questions are concerned with psychology, with the functioning of that mental faculty "the imagination." But we observe a second thing in these questions, an emphasis on individual difference, on the idiosyncratic, that which is distinctive to one single mind, the individual style.

Now look at the third set of conventional things to say about creative writing. Once our students have written, we might say of them individually, "He has a great imagination," or "He knows (or does not know) how to use his imagination," or "You haven't imagined this completely enough," or "You didn't feel that very strongly did you?" or "He has no imagination whatsoever." Or "He always copies what someone else does, he's not inventive or creative. There's nothing new, nothing individual, about what he writes." We might talk like that. Or we might say, "This is really awfully bad writing, and I have to resist the urge to correct it. But I know that one must resist that urge. Correcting creative writing is disciplining the undisciplined: how can it be disciplined and creative? How imaginative if restrained by rules?" Or it might go like this: "One must never correct a student's creative writing. To correct it is to reject it, and since it is the expression of the individuality of the child, to reject the writing is to reject the child." These, too, are conventional kinds of things to say about creative writing. Whether or not you or I agree with them is irrelevant now. What is relevant is the phrasing of the assertions themselves, the assumptions of this kind of talk.

And the notions which inform this talk again include the notions of the imagination as a psychological faculty, and of creative writing as the expression of the individuality, or difference, or distinctiveness of a particular mind, an emphasis on novelty and originality. We also have, though, the notions of sincerity and depth of feeling here, as well as the notions of the sensitivity and sacredness of the individual creative imagination.

In less casual and apparently more philosophical talk about creative writing, we might raise such questions as these: "What part does the intellect, the rational faculty, the reason, play in imaginative writing? What part does the emotion play? What part the imagination?" And we would expect that the answers would assert that creative writing was (or was not, probably was) the product of the imagination. The answer might go on to assert either an antithesis of imagination and reason or the need for a synthesis of the imagination and reason. Or in the words of Professor James E. Miller, Jr., a Whitman scholar, writing on imagination in the elementary schools: "I must also insist that it [the imagination] has a separate but equal status with the intellect. Indeed, it is possible that only the integration of both faculties develops each to

the full. . . . Reason and imagination make up the whole man."[3] Even in the apparently more profound and less casual talk, we again find the emphasis on the psychological; we again find the pursuit of the implications of "creative," and "imaginative."

Now what sort of model or picture is it which would make these different notions cohere? Where do we find them coming together explicitly? In fact, the assumptions of much of the talk we have looked at so far are nicely gathered together in a little poem by James Stephens entitled "Demiurge,"[4] and he goes beyond these assumptions to some we have not yet observed:

1

Wise Emotion, some have thought,
Is that whereby a poem's wrought:
More will have it, that the Hive
The Bee comes from, and all alive.

Is Thought: while others fret to tell,
Imagination, like a well,
Bubbles all that is to be
Into shape and certainty.

2

Imagination does but seem:
Thought is wisdom, in a dream:
And Emotion can, with strain,
Tell a pleasure from a pain:

These, the Sleepy Ones and Dull,
That nothing sow, and nothing cull,
Nothing have that's fit to sing
The Wide-Awake, The Living Thing.

3

The living, ever-waking Will:
The ever-spacious, ever-still:
Wherefrom, as from a fountain, springs
All that praises, soars, sings:

All that is not dull and dense,
Bogged in thought, and clogged in sense,
Comes unbid, and surge on surge,
From the Will, the Demiurge.

In the first two stanzas, Stephens is clearly recalling what is conventionally said about the genesis of poems, the paradigm of creative writing. Imagination? intellect? emotions--some people, he says, argue for one or another of these faculties as the source of linguistic creativity, of "All that praises, soars, and sings." But they're wrong. Really, he says, it is the "Will." Notice that he, too, phrases his answer in terms of psychology, and in terms of faculty psychology. While he objects to the conventional answers, he is giving an answer of the same kind as the conventional answers. But he goes beyond that, to lead us to assumptions we have not yet been aware of, assumptions which I suspect underlie and explain how we come to talk the way we do about creative writing.

Notice the language with which he characterizes the creative experience:

> Wherefrom, as from a fountain, springs...
>
> Comes unbid, and surge on surge
> From the Will, the Demiurge.

The creative product springs up, as from a fountain, comes involuntarily, unbid, comes surging, rhythmically pulsing up, comes from the depths, from the mysterious "demiurge." Now that language reminds me of another poem about writing poems, about creative writing. That other poem is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan."

James Stephen's surging fountain of creativity obviously echoes Coleridge's fountain surging from a deep romantic chasm:

> And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
> As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
> A mighty fountain momently was forced:
> Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
> Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail...

And Stephens:

> The living, ever-waking Will:
> The ever-spacious, ever still:
> Wherefrom, as from a fountain, springs
> All that praises, soars, and sings:
>
> All that is not dull and dense,
> Bogged in thought, and clogged in sense,
> Comes unbid, and surge on surge,
> From the Will, the Demiurge.

This echo suggests that in the background of this conventional kind of talk about creative writing, the pursuit of the psychological associations of the terms of "creative" or "imaginative," there may well be what goes along with Coleridge's surging fountain:

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw:
> It was an Abyssinian maid,
> And on her dulcimer she played,
> Singing of Mount Abora.
> Could I revive within me
> Her Symphony and song,
> To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air,
> That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
> And all who heard should see them there,
> And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes with holy dread,
> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Now several of the notions we have seen informing conventional talk about creative writing are found in this passage. The creative writer is there, the speaker, the I, and there too is an account of the creative process. There is the stimulus or motive, the revived song of the "Abyssinian maid." There is the great profundity of feeling which results from the stimulus or motive--"to such a deep delight 'twould win me." And there is the creativity which in turn results from the depth of feeling, the creative product:

> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air...

And there is the reverence of this creative act:

> And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

And there is even a description of what is currently taken to be the appropriate teacher response to a student's piece of creative writing:

> And close your eyes with holy dread...

Or is that pushing the analogy too far?

In any event, the extent to which one can find in this Romantic poem about writing poems several of the notions we have seen informing conventional talk about creative writing raises an interesting question. Is it perhaps possible that there is implicit in the background of our conventional talk about imaginative or creative writing, a picture of an early nineteenth century vision of creative writing?

I referred a bit ago to James E. Miller, Jr., writing an essay on imagination and elementary schools for the National Council of Teachers of English, an essay published in 1967. Professor Miller begins that essay by quoting the first couple of stanzas of Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."[5] Professor Miller, from whom we have already found the conventional school talk about imagination, in order to find a poetic paraphrase of his position, goes to Wordsworth. And Stephens, who summarizes conventional school talk, echoes another Romantic, Coleridge. Wordsworth tells us that imaginative creativity is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling; Coleridge pictures for us what that is like: This is the romantic vision, the romantic dream. The subtitle of his picture, you will recall, is "A Vision in A Dream." Stephens, too, pictures for us what that is like. He gives us a picture of a dream, of the same dream.

And do not the conventional kinds of things we say about creative writing--the way we phrase our questions, indeed the questions themselves, and the way we phrase our judgments, indeed the judgments themselves--do these not reflect this same picture? Does not our conventional school talk about creative writing reflect a painting or picture of this early 19th century dream of the creative imagination?

> Morning haze:
> as in a painting of a dream,
> men go their ways.

One might say (and not at all facetiously) that in continuing to use the conventional talk about creative writing in the classroom, we are those men, going about in a morning haze.

To the extent that my samples of conventional language are both accurate and representative, it seems that we may indeed have been elaborating in our teaching talk and teaching behavior on an early nineteenth century picture of creative writing, pursuing the associations of the expressions "creative" and "imaginative."

One might also, however, by his teaching talk and behavior, elaborate the expressions "writing" and "language." It seems to me that in thinking of, reading about, teaching, reading, and evaluating creative

writing, one should in fact deliberately seek to pursue the associations of these expressions, perhaps to the exclusion of the associations of "creative" and "imaginative." This involves shifting our attention from the creative process to the created product, from concern about processes of generation of a poem or play or story to examination of the poems, plays, and stories themselves. Such a shift, of course, is consistent not only with fairly old developments in the study of language and literature, but also with more recent developments in research on creativity itself.[6]

One obvious consequence of this shift is the challenging responsibility to be knowledgeable. As long as we dealt with the imponderables of nineteenth century theoretical psychology, we could, as teachers of creative writing, proceed by definition and dogma, by impulse and intuition, by guess and by gosh. When our staples were postulated entities and hypostatized faculties, undiscoverable and hence irrefutable, we didn't need knowledge. Assuming there were no stars in all the shrouded heavens we were free to navigate by the seat of our definitions.

When we pursue the associations of writing and language, however, we step out of this pedagogue's paradise. Language is observable, systematic, and meaningful. It is subject to overt and explicit observation and generalization, whether one is thinking of oral or written language, of intonation (or pauses) in speech or of the equally complex and subtle system of punctuation in writing, of the developing syntactic, rhetorical, and conceptual capabilities of school children, or of the patterning of syntactic, rhetorical, and conceptual features of a given kind of writing. That is to say, by pursuing the associations of "writing" and "language," one is to assume responsibility for <u>knowing,</u> in a precise and detailed sense, something about the language development of students and about the qualities of the kinds of writing (narrowly defined) which one seeks to enable them to learn.

Perhaps an illustration of what it is like to pursue the implications of "writing" and "language" will clarify. A group of teachers in Hawaii and I recently began to look carefully at haiku, seeking to make statements descriptive of some aspects of haiku language. Some of what we observed is concisely represented in the six haiku which follow. The first three are by mature writers:

After the bells hummed
and were silent, flowers
chimed a peal of fragrance.

Basho (1644-1694)
tr. Harry Behn

Women, rice-planting:
    all muddy, save for one thing--
that's their chanting.

Raizan (1653-1716)
tr. H. G. Henderson

Wake up, old sleepy
    butterfly! Come, come with me
on my pilgrimage!

Basho (1644-1694)
tr. Harry Behn

And the next three are immature haiku, all by children about age 11:

A bunny is cute.
It is fuzzy and furry.
Hop, little bunny.

Loyal to country
Faithful always to master
Is the loyal dog.

Apple blossoms
Like white butterflies
All about to fly away.

Of the three, we would all agree that the third is by far the most imaginative and creative, although we might disagree if asked to explain what we meant by saying that.

The three mature poems represent fairly well some of the prominent syntactic features of haiku. The first consists of a single main clause plus dependent elements, the second of an incomplete clause used as a main clause, the third of two main clauses. Now look at the children's syntax. In the first immature haiku, each line is a separate clause. A bit of trouble here with the English haiku convention of run-on lines. But notice that the writer has (though with some inconsistency of perspective) used the imperative structure ("Hop) like Basho's "Wake up!") with the noun of indirect address ("little bunny," like Basho's "old, sleepy butterfly"). She's having a bit of trouble, but she's coming along; unable to stretch her syntax over this three line frame, she finally draws upon one English haiku convention which avoids that problem.

In the second child's haiku, the student has by golly stretched his syntax over all three lines, but at considerable cost to his grace and dignity. He's coming along, though, making progress, in respect at

least to this feature of haiku: he sees what is asked of him syntactically, though he has trouble delivering it. The third haiku delivers the goods: a single incomplete clause stretched over all three lines, and very nicely stretched at that.

Notice too the "is" verbs in the first two children's haiku--not the verbs of the mature haiku. Progress in coming to be creative and imaginative in writing haiku means in part deleting or replacing such verbs as these, as the third child perceived.

So much by way of illustrating some of what a teacher of haiku should be able to say about the syntax of mature haiku and of the progress kids are making in approximating that syntax. I mentioned other features as well, rhetorical and conceptual. One instance of a rhetorical feature, a traditional rhetorical feature, is that of figurative comparisons. In the first mature haiku, one finds the metaphors "flowers chimed" and ""peals of fragrance," metaphors involving a mixture of sense perceptions, speaking of fragrance as if it were like sound. In the second we have the implication of the unmuddied chanting, again involving a mixture of senses, of the visually perceived mud and aurally perceived chanting. In the children's haiku, one finds only one comparison, that is the comparison of the apple blossoms to the butterfly in the third and best of the children's haiku. Significantly in this very impressive but still immature haiku, the comparison is both explicit (it is a simile) and simple (it does not involve a mixture of sense impressions).

I've exemplified syntactic and rhetorical considerations. What of the conceptual? The mature haiku use the nouns "butterfly," "bells," "flowers," "fragrance," "women," and "chanting." The immature use the nouns "bunny," "dog," "master," "country," "blossoms," and "butterfly." Citing the nouns in this way is one economical way of indicating what the haiku are written about, and that is one conceptual feature of haiku. The first two children's haiku are indeed about nature, but about animals, and domesticated animals at that, animals that recur in children's poetry generally, but not in mature haiku. Again, the third child's haiku is clearly superior: this child would appear to understand what mature haiku are written about.

Notice that the choice of subject for the first two children is probably not in any profound or simple sense a matter of what interests the child: butterflies and birds and bugs and blossoms--the frequent stuff of mature haiku--do interest kids. What is rather more operative, I take it, in the children's choice of what to write about, is their sense of what is appropriate to write about in haiku (or, in this case perhaps, more generally in academic kid poetry). And the third child has a rather more refined sense of this than do the first two, has acquired a better sense of the conceptual form of haiku.

In effect I have been illustrating some of the kind of talk which comes from pursuing the associations of "writing" and "language" instead of the associations of "imaginative" and "creative." I have been seeking to illustrate the detailed knowledge for which a teacher of creative writing becomes responsible when he does pursue these associations.

One might well ask what has happened to the creativity of creative writing. In the most imaginative and creative of the immature haiku, the haiku with the apple blossom-butterfly comparison, the writer most nearly approximates the mature usage. That, I take it, is in part what we mean by saying that this haiku is the most imaginative and creative of the three. I don't mean to redefine the expressions "creative" and "imaginative"; I only mean to clarify one way in which they conventionally do work for us.

Further, I wish to suggest that in acquiring the language of haiku to the extent that he has acquired it, in getting the hang of part of the haiku way of saying things, the third child has acquired as well part of the haiku way of seeing things. The insight, imagination, creativity (I wish to suggest) is consequent upon, the result of experience with, in a complex sense, the language forms of the haiku. It may be, that is to say, that our conventional emphasis on singularity, individuality, and idiosyncracy impedes the very end for which we use it. Individual insight, significant individual insight, creativity of the sort which contributes to the sum of human experience, as first rate literature does, seems likely to be a consequence of the mastery of existing forms of expression. Getting a way of saying is a significant means of getting a way of seeing.[8]

This leads me to further recommendations, recommendations concerning teaching practice, not simply teacher talk or the way we generate teacher talk. In speaking of progress in acquiring the syntactic, rhetorical, and conceptual forms of haiku, I was assuming the learning writer's problem to be one of adding forms to his language learning repertory. His problem is conceived then as a problem in language learning, in language acquisition. In fact, all of our students have considerable experience at language learning outside of the classroom. If we were to seek to capitalize on this experience, if we were to seek to reproduce in teaching creative writing some important features of the child's non-academic language learning experience, we would proceed quite differently than we conventionally do in teaching creative writing. I have three pair of particular recommendations of this sort to make.

The first pair concerns preparation for the writing. In an ordinary, non-academic language learning situation, one observes as a listener and some time later produces as a speaker, always observing a

particular kind of language in use, and observing many different instances of particular kind of language, e.g., dinner table conversation, or what slightly older kids say on the playground when no adults are about, or what adults say when attending a baseball game ("Ole John swings a mean stick!"), etc. What does this imply for teaching creative writing? First, that students should receive in a peculiar sense an opportunity for learning the relevant kinds of writing, i.e., an opportunity for the implicit and as it were intuitive observation, generalization, and delayed reproduction of the distinctive features of these kinds of language, that they be exposed as listeners and as readers to many instances of the particular kinds of writing, narrowly defined, that they might later come to produce. This in turn implies a prior identification of these kinds, and the selection of appropriate instances of them. The Nebraska Curriculum in English for Grades K through 12 can be seen as an ambitious and groping attempt to do this.[9]

The second of my first pair of particular recommendations is this: that these opportunities for this learning be so arranged as both to match the students' present linguistic and conceptual strategies and to anticipate and prepare for integration of the literature curriculum and the composition curriculum, as well as a careful articulation of creative writing curriculum through several grade levels. And it questions the effectiveness of the spur of the moment assignment in creative writing, as well as the effectiveness of even planned exercises in creativity when they are planned without detailed reference to kinds of imaginative language read or written at surrounding grade levels.

The next pair of recommendations concerns a closely related feature of ordinary, non-academic language learning situations--the role in those situations of children slightly older than the learner. The role seems to be an important one in providing a source of language for the learner to observe, internalize, and imitate. This implies that part of the experience of students with creative writing should involve hearing somewhat older children perform. Second graders should fairly routinely have competent third, fourth, and fifth graders telling them original stories and poems. Senior high students should routinely perform their own stuff for junior high students, as part of the study of literature in the junior high school. One might well recruit creative hippies or high school dropouts to recite their poetry or dialogues or skits to high school juniors and seniors.

Second, the reading of the kids, their literature study, should include a considerable segment of student writing read, talked about, and analyzed just as if it were by John Keats or William Faulkner or J. R. R. Tolkien. Good creative writing, carefully selected, from third, fourth, and fifth grade students should be seriously treated as literature, as textbook material, in the third grade classroom.

The third pair of recommendations is related to the second: it concerns the status and functioning of the language forms the child learns in an ordinary, non-academic language learning situation. Consider as a paradigm what a child sees when observing the language of an older child complaining about the food he is served for supper. The language comes into a behavioral set that includes older people interacting, and the language is working incidentally to that interaction. Perhaps the parents respond sympathetically, perhaps angrily; perhaps they regard the complaint as adolescent rebellion, or as a transfer of hostility from a frustrating school situation. But whatever they do, they do <u>something</u> with it, and the older child is doing something with it. Indeed, on occasions the adults do the same thing with such language as the older child is doing. In short, in ordinary language learning situations kids observe language which <u>is</u> meaningful to, which works for, which is used by, which is taken seriously by--adults.

The implication of this, it seems to me, nearly undoes us all. I am not at all sure we can take creative writing seriously as adults in most school classrooms today. And in the experience of most of our students, no other adults do either. The fact is, I think, that most teachers and a good many professors (even some in English departments) can't abide poems. Philippe Aries speaks of "childhood... becoming the repository of customs abandoned by the adults,"[10] and for a great many school students today, creative writing is one such custom. The same writer briefly sketches the history of hoops:

> From being the plaything of all ages, and an accessory used in dancing and acrobatics, the hoop would gradually be confined to smaller and smaller children until it was finally abandoned altogether, illustrating once again the truth that, in order to retain the favour of children, a toy must have some connection with the world of adults.[11]

Toys and uses of language. As a teacher one has to demonstrate by his behavior that imaginative language does indeed "have some connection with the world of adults," that adults do indeed take this kind of language seriously. The teacher, the mature model in the classroom, must obviously use these kinds of language. He need not use them in a publishable way, but he does need to use them. He needs to use his own compositions as part of the literature to which he exposes his students. He needs to be seen reading and studying and analyzing these kinds of language. Not in order to be seen, and not in order to prepare for a lesson, but in order to do the kinds of things one writes or reads poems to do. That's one way of being serious about creative writing, of demonstrating that you do take this use of language seriously. And I recognize that it is a large order.

The second may be still more difficult. It is that you take seriously the imaginative language that kids do in fact use. Partially I have in mind respecting their use of the rhetoric of mass media art forms, but chiefly I have in mind something else. In order to illustrate this, and the immense difficulty of taking it seriously in the classroom, I include a poem written by my ten-year-old son. This boy at the time that he wrote this poem was a model student in a WASP middle class neighborhood in Squaresville, the City of Churches, Lincoln, Nebraska, and still is for that matter. He is consistently the teacher's pet, he consistently gets top grades in all subjects, he religiously practices his piano for one hour each day, and he recently got a medal, of which he was justly proud, for perfect attendance at his church choir. His mother and I returned home one summer day to find that this ten-year-old boy had of his own volition composed a poem on my typewriter. The poem totaled 44 words in 29 lines, usually one word to a line. It was entitled "Description of Donald," and it read as follows:

Dumb,
Stupid,
Rotten,
Punky,
Damn,
Fuckin',
Shittan,
Bastird,
Son of a Bitch,
Dirty,
Ass Hole,
A Brat,
A Show Off,
A Hot Shot,
Bully,
Greedy,
Liar,
Non Sportsmen Like,
Butt,
Crummy,
Cruddy,
Queer,
Poopy,
Reformed,
Retarded,
Spoiled,
Nut.

P.S.
He can also go Hell.

I must say that I was surprised and a bit dismayed by this poem. And I must also admit that, from what I know of the boy my son was describing, there was in my son's description more truth than poetry. Granting all that, still, my son is using poetry. And it is obvious, I think that this poem could not have been written in school.[12] In school, I'm afraid my son might well have written "A bunny is cute" or "Faithful always to master/Is the loyal dog." When a child cannot come to write "the loyal dog" in school, then we can claim to take creative writing seriously in the classroom. When we are prepared to take creative writing seriously, when we are able to create language learning situations in the classroom, and when we can claim to be knowledgeable about the language of creative writing, and the progress our students make in acquiring that language, perhaps we will still go about in a morning haze, as men in a painting of a dream. That may be an occupational hazard of our profession. But perhaps we can also increase the effectiveness of our efforts to teach creative writing.

Footnotes

1. Harold G. Henderson, ed. and tr., An Introduction to Haiku. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958), p. 104.

2. James Stephens, "Sensible People," Collected Poems. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1954), p. 345.

3. James E. Miller, Jr., "Imagination and the Literature Curriculum," in Alexander Frazier, ed., New Directions in Elementary English. (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English 1967, p. 21.

4. Stephens, pp. 248-249.

5. Frazier, pp. 15-16.

6. See, for example, John Curtic Gowan, et. al., eds., Creativity: Its Educational Implications. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967), especially Chapter 8, "Research and Summary," pp. 285ff.

7. See, for example, F. Goldman Eisler, Psycholinguistics: Experiments in Spontaneous Speech. (London: Academic Press, 1968), and Margaret E. Ashida, "Something for Everyone: A Standard Corpus of Contemporary American Expository Essays," Research in the Teaching of English, 2:1 (Spring, 1968), pp. 14-23.

8. Cf. Frances Christensen, "A Lesson From Hemingway," Notes toward a New Rhetoric. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 25-26.

9. A Curriculum for English, Grades 1-12, Developed by the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, Department of English, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, under funds from the U.S. Office of Education and under the direction of Paul A. Olson and Frank M. Rice, Co-Directors. The Curriculum is being published by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.

10. Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood. (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 71.

11. Aries, p. 95.

12. It is true, however, that my son could readily identify the model from which he derived the form of his poem, and that it was a poem he had read in school some months before. Interestingly, it was a poem about a railroad and a train, so that the elongated form, with lines like cross-ties on a railroad, functioned quite differently than it did for my son; my son, I take it, applied the form creatively to represent visually the immense heap of garbage he was piling on the offending Donald.

SOME REFLECTIONS

ON THE SUBJECT OF COMPOSITION

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In the matter of composition, it seems that the traditional wisdom has little to offer, simply because there is hardly a tradition worth speaking of. 'Democratic' education is a very young and delicate infant; and I presume one requires democracy as a condition of autonomous composition; in England it began, in theory, about 100 years ago, with the Education Act of 1870. But the schools of England for many decades, although ostensibly committed to democratic education, were actually given over to industrial, trades, commercial education:[1] the provision of manual and clerical skills such as that phase of the industrial revolution and its economic structures required: not merely the skills, but also the attitudes--attitudes of deference, neatness, reliability, punctuality, legibility in penmanship, and so on; in a word, the slave virtues.

The school-curriculum and the skills, e.g., of composition, that it exists to extend, are still heavily under the influence of the last phase of our society's technological, industrial, and commercial development: the means of production, and many of the contingent technical and technocratic skills, change rather faster than our school system.

Thus, many schools still attend, with much anxious care and botheration, to penmanship: and home economics lessons prepare girls to cook in yesterday's kitchens. And such lags are hardly surprising when you look at the field of recruitment to the teaching profession: it is the most conservative stratum of our society--the lower middle class.

The tension that exists between the exigencies and possibilities of tomorrow, and the curricula and purposes of yesterday--this is reinforced, subtly, by a conflict of life-styles, varying in intensity as between rural and urban cultures, but nevertheless recognizable throughout the United States and Britain. Yesterday, the life-style of the teacher was one of a very few models that most adolescents could look to as offering an alternative to what their parents were entrenched in. Today, the mass-media and increased mobility both serve to offer the adolescent a much broader spectrum of possibilities--I need only mention the Beatles to illustrate what is rather an obvious point.

Now, composition is at the centre of these pressures and these tensions. Thirty years ago, to judge from the evidence of the mouldering text-books, the schools had a very decided and unambiguous notion of the nature and purpose of composition: to put a piece of prose together in a narrowly predictable way, according to ostensibly immutable rules deriving from a quasi-Aristotelian rhetoric--in brass tacks, to write a well-turned essay on a subject not too close to one's central concerns; and its implicit purpose was to work to achieve a measurable decorum, a decorum of syntax and of idiom, such as would prove acceptable at the next hurdle in the educational-cum-vocational race. Produce a passable imitation of a 19th century New Englander's essay, and the Bank or The Insurance Company or the college would smile kindly and open their doors.

Such conventions still hold in many quarters and backwaters, and I, for one, have nothing against an elegant, sharp, clouty or edgy prose-style; nor against legibility, or acceptable (i.e. undistracting) spelling. But today's notions about the aims of composition lend themselves to scrutiny most usefully just at the point where they begin to diverge most sharply from yesteryear's orthodoxies.

Those orthodoxies cost too much in the way of boredom, frustration, triviality, mindlessness, mechanicalness, routine, depersonalization and failure: in fact, they served primarily not as a means of promoting genuine composition but as a means of separating out the sheep and the goats. And the effect of their methods was not, in fact, what they were claimed to be by their most persuasive proponents: they did not promote pleasure in writing, interest in writing, delight in writing, 'style' or panache or vivacity in writing; on the contrary, they promoted a writing characterized by impersonality, awkwardness, crabbed indirections, drabness, lifelessness, nullity.

What was the role of the teacher in all this? Primarily to be an efficient custodian and a thorough corrector: that is, he had to ensure that the classroom discipline was such that all the students would write more or less of an essay in more or less the same time, and then he had to expunge all the students' aberrations from an assumed norm, in orthography, punctuation, syntax and paragraphing. Ancillary activities, assumed to be directly related to the job of writing, included parsing, rhetoric, spelling, and paraphrasing: the presentation and analysis of a set of models--words, word clusters, and sentence-clusters--which the student was thought to imitate to his benefit.

We are learning to abandon such malpractices: though, to be sure, it is extremely worrying to see the Roberts English Series perpetuating such time- and mind-wasting in the sacred name of the 'new grammar'!

But why, precisely, should we abandon such tidy, demonstrably pacifying, activities? I suppose the most important reason is that they don't, in fact, accomplish what they were thought to accomplish; but--and this is worse--they usurp time and effort which many of us now believe can be spent more profitably.

There is, for example, a respectable body of clear, incontrovertible evidence to the effect that work in spelling (memorization) and in grammar (e.g., parsing, analysis, and the manipulation of complex sentences) does not have any measurably beneficial effect on students' performances in writing. Imitation is not a major factor in language acquisition: or to put the matter more precisely: "there is not a shred of evidence supporting a view that progress toward adult norms of grammar arises merely from practice in overt imitation of adult sentences."[2] Cf. Gertrude Stein's point, that it was from her dog, Basket, that she learned what sentences were; and the poem that Denise Levertov made out of this:

> Shlup, shlup, the dog
> as it laps up
> water
> makes intelligent
> music, resting
> now and then to
> take breath in irregular
> measure.
>
> (from "Six Variations")

This is not to say that one cannot envisage an acceptable school-curriculum in grammar or, more broadly, in language: but, as I see it, it would be essentially a study of behavior, of human interactions, a study using the methods of the empirical sciences--formulating hypotheses, making observations, creating classifications, problem-solving, devising experimental techniques, and so on--rather than a drearily and trivially descriptive or prescriptive thing. It would appeal, not to rote-learning and the mechanical transfer of unexciting and useless rules, but to the students' curiosity, amusement, interest in taboos, in their own behavior, in social idiosyncracies, shibboleths and incongruities, and in problem-solving and the techniques of drawing inferences and constructing generalizations.[3] I hope that we shall see such a study of language coming into our high schools in the next ten or fifteen years; but I'm not entirely confident that <u>most</u> pupils at the elementary school level are at a stage in their development where such enquiries would hold any charge or resonance or élan for them. But I'd be happy to be proved wrong: and I <u>would</u> certainly like to see a collaborative team of specialists and elementary teachers create language units for grades five and six: they might

conceivably start, as does Man: A Course of Study (Education Development Center, Inc.), with animal behavior, as a usefully contrastive field.

At present, we are, I think, moving away from a narrow preoccupation with writing and reading. (Reading, in the States, of course, strikes an Englishman as a big utilitarian business paying a great deal of attention to means and very little to ends.[4]) Writing has certainly enjoyed the lion's share of the English curriculum, for reasons that I've already suggested, and for others too: most examinations, for example, involve writing almost exclusively, and writing, as a classroom activity, is one of the quietest in the repertoire. But the act of writing has for too much of the time been a merely arbitrary, imposed activity, a demanded activity, coming from nowhere, going nowhere, and existing in an unreal sort of no man's land, a pedagogical phantasm. Moreover, recent attempts to give it a greater 'reality', less arbitrariness, have been largely a fairly unsubtle application of behavioristic devices: present the pupils with a set of stimuli and then ensure that, in some acceptable way, they respond to the stimulus. The rub of this lies in the words "then ensure": how ensure?

Let's consider three situations. First the case of the teacher who presents each of 35 12-year-old pupils with a picture,[5] each child having a different picture. The instructions are quite clear: "Look at the picture that I've put on your desk. Don't look, for the moment, at your neighbour's picture. Work your way 'into' the situation in the picture. Try to 'become' one of the people in the picture. Then, when you are ready, write whatever you like, about being that person." If the teacher has taken the trouble to select a good repertoire of pictures, from Van Gogh, Ben Shahn, Turner, Ed Steichen, Edward Weston, and so on, then most of the kids will latch on to something, and some of them will write extremely interesting stories, conversation, fragments of autobiography, anecdotes, jokes, etc. etc. But the exercise is essentially a teacher-manipulated stimulus-response situation, and alert, intelligent, perceptive kids, once the initial curiosity has worn off, grow weary and wary of 'salivating' to order. They feel that they have been tricked or triggered.

Let us consider another technique. The whole class look at one picture, with the teacher, whose job it is to elicit responses and to amplify those responses (by further eliciting), and the children offer their accounts, their explorations, their descriptions, working, in response to the teacher's questioning, to a richer, ampler, more precisely articulated account of 'what is happening' in the picture. E.g.:

Q. That man on the sidewalk: what's he doing, exactly?

AA. He's waving.
Waving his arms.
Shaking his fist.

Q. Is he making a fist?

AA. No, his hand's not closed.
Course not.
Don't be daft.

Q. So he's waving?

AA. Yes, of course.
Yes, to that woman ...

Q. And what's she doing?

AA. Looks surprised.
Startled.
Just standing there.
With her mouth open.

Q. So she's surprised to see him?

AA. Maybe.
I reckon so.
She looks as though she's seen a ghost.

Q. So she wasn't expecting to see him there?

AA. Nope.
She's flabbergasted.
I'm not sure.
You could knock her down with a feather.

Q. Why aren't you sure? etc., etc.

In this situation, the pupils are offering their interpretations of the picture to the common pool, are moving towards a concensus, fitting their individual contributions together, but the process isstill fairly closely controlled by the teacher: the teacher is not telling the pupils what they should be seeing, but he is nudging them in the direction of seeing things that they might otherwise have overlooked, by merely glancing. He is also moving them in the direction of the kind of situation described so vividly by Heinrich Von Kleist in his essay,

"On the Gradual Fabrication of Thought", in which thought is generated by social interaction, and "l'idée vient en parlant".

A third situation is that in which the pupils are working in groups, each with its own picture, and the role of nudger, of instigator, or provoker, is shared within the group. Choosing between this and the previous, teacher-directed, situation must clearly depend not on any elevated and simplistic notions of freedom or tyranny, but, more usefully, on a consideration of the object of the exercise. What do I want the kids to gain from this experience? Both situations seem to me to have value, in that the teacher may well be able to help kids to respond more fully, to bring their responses to consciousness (though we must always remember that a 'full' response is sometimes, initially at least, a confused and confusing response); I would simply suggest that the teacher-directed situation should never be regarded as the only way to set up fruitful discussion; some alternation of the two is what is called for. But the crucial difference between the first, on the one hand, and the second and third, on the other, is that the first is a 'private' solitary activity in which all speech is internal, whereas the others involve conversation. In the second, of course, the extent of the teacher's contribution, other than nudging questions, will depend on the degree to which he believes in the value of his contributions--and too many of us, in this respect, are sitting targets for Against Interpretation![6]

It will also depend on the degree to which we can resist, or at least use intelligently, that impulse to expand the pupils' utterances which Roger Brown and Ursula Bellugi have recognized as one of the adult's compulsive responses to children's talk.[7] And an intelligent use of the impulse to expand is well illustrated by Brown and Bellugi:

> "the mother ... acts as if she were assuming that the child means everything he says, all the words and also their order, but as if he might also mean more than he says. From the mother's point of view, an expansion is a kind of communication check; it says in effect: 'Is this what you mean?'."[8]

To revert, for a moment, to the three picture-situations: I presume that it is part of the teacher's role to help the pupil to 'realize the possibilities' of response. But a common blunder is the failure to respect developmental 'decorum': the fact that, for example, the response proper to a 12-year-old may well be very different from the response proper to an adult; the mother 'acts as if she were assuming that the child means everything he says', but as teachers we often act as if we assume that the pupil couldn't possibly mean what he says, precisely because it is not what we would say. And here we touch on one of the most delicate problems of composition: that it is often a strategy whereby the pupil is brought to say what the

teacher would have him say, and is brought to say it in the way in which the teacher would have him say it.[9]

This serves to raise the question of decorum in another sense: what is composition to be about and how is it to be about it? To choose a not too obvious example from one of my own experiences in an English elementary school, which of the following do you prefer?

THE SNAKE

The crooked wiggly slithering snake
Slides along the grass.
The crooked wiggly slithering snake
Bites us when we pass.

His jet black eyes
Are very bright.
In knots he ties
Himself at night.

The crooked wiggly slithering snake
Slides along the grass.
The crooked wiggly slithering snake
Bites us when we pass.

(Valerie, aged 8)

ME IN A TREE

My hands blue with clutching and wind howling round me from the moor. My legs fumbling round the trunk. Now my neck is aching and stiff. I daren't look down to the ground or I'll fall. Oh, no! My best blazer is ripped. What will dad say? Now even the branch leaves are against me. Listen, how they mock as the wind howls; gabbling fools! Stop it! Stop it!

(D. G.[10], a boy of 10)

Most readers prefer the former: although its subject is conventionally more repellant than that of the second, it is more neatly, more clearly organized; one is reminded of a tidy piece of needlework or knitting or the Book of Kells. The second, by contrast, is wild, untidy, noisy, anarchic. My own hunch is that they represent two distinct

states of sensibility. Allowing for the fact that they are by two very dissimilar children, the first seems to me to be characteristic of those phases in one's life when one is in a state of consolidation, on a plateau of relatively placid ordering, best epitomized by the Beethoven of the Fourth Symphony, doing something pretty well, but something that is almost too easy. The second seems to me symptomatic of a state of flux, of experimentation, an innovative, relatively disordered, exploratory phase, more like the Beethoven of the Fifth Symphony or much of Charles Ives. (I concede that this analogy is crude, but I'm sure that the reader will readily provide better ones, perhaps after the fashion of the traditional Appolonian - Dionysian distinction.)

As far as modes are concerned--the 'how to be about it'--I'm sure that we must not only allow for, but also actively encourage diversity: set up a very broad spectrum of possible 'models'[11], both verbal and also multi-median, using all the resources of tape, photography, film, illustration, and so on. Then we must allow the kids to choose from among these models and let them find out what it is possible to 'say' in the chosen medium. This will, of course, involve them in improvisation, analogous to the kinds of improvisation that are currently gaining ground in drama in school, proceeding exploratorily by way of trial and error, working through, modifying, refining, sharpening, and so on. In such work the relationship between pupil and teacher is partly collaborative, but at crucial stages, where the pupil can't se his way through, the teacher's role is like that of the side-coach in tne theatre or on the football field.

We must also recognize the sheer diversity and complexity of the psychology of making: that some children enjoy relative privacy, that for some the activity is virtually its own reward, while for others the act of making is most cheerfully embraced when it has some close social end, as, for example, when Karen, in the 6th grade, wrote[12] the following story specifically for children in a 1st grade classroom:

THE BIRD

> One day, I saw a bright colored bird. He was a black shiny bird with a red spot on his wing. He was sitting in a field of corn. He seemed to be talking to other birds all over the field, and waiting for their reply. I tried to catch him but he flew away. I looked over the field many times before I found him. When I saw him the last time he was happy and gay, now he had a broken wing. I was very unhappy, so I took the bird in my hand and then took my sweater and made a soft bed for him. I took him

home with me. I begged my mother to
let me take care of him. She said yes.
Three weeks had past I fed him and kept
him in a box, he seemed to be getting well.
One day, I went to his box he was gone. I
looked all over the house and found him in
the upstairs bathroom. I then took him in
my hand and took him back to the place
where I found him and then I went home.
When I got there he was sitting in his box.
So I kept him till he died seven years
later. It is said that you can't tame the
wild. But it is possible.

(Karen, aged 12)

The moralizing at the end may strike the reader as intrusive, but it is very much a part of Karen's way of proceeding in life. To expunge it, in the cause of artistic cohesion, would be to attack a part of Karen that is, at the moment, very necessary to her as a means of ordering her universe.

"Why compose?" is clearly a question to which there are almost as many answers as there are children. The roots of the impulse to compose and of the pertinacity required for a sustained effort of composition are in part irrational, and I think that the way we organize our classrooms and timetables must allow for this fact; so that, if an individual says "I'd like to write a story" or "I'd like to get on with my story", such may be possible, ad hoc.

The impulse to compose cannot be separated off from what is being composed, nor can it be isolated--except theoretically in, say, systematic psychology or psychopathology--from the composer. For composition occurs, in our real lives, at a point of intersection between the inner and the outer, between the self and something operating on, pressing in on, provoking, exciting, intriguing, that self. Richard Wilbur, for example, has told us that his poems get written most often as a response to a sense of calamity, a sense of being threatened, a sense of impending fragmentation of the order that the self has provisionally constructed out of the flux of experience. So that a poem is, for Wilbur, a means of reassembling the world, of regaining or retrieving a sense of order. Edwin Morgan, on the other hand, writes:

"I think of poetry as partly an instrument of exploration,
like a spaceship, into new fields of feeling or experience
(or old fields which become new in new contexts or
environments), and partly a special way of recording
moments and events (taking the 'prose' of them, the grit

of the facts of the case, as being in our age extremely important) . . . I like a poetry that comes not out of 'poetry' but out of a story in today's newspaper, or a chance personal encounter in a city street, or the death of a famous person: I am very strongly moved by the absolute force of what actually happens, because, after all, that is it, there is really nothing else that has its poignance, its razor edge. It is not an easy poetry to write, and I think it requires a peculiar kind of imagination that is willing to bend itself to meet a world which is lying there in the rain like an old shoe."

(Edwin Morgan, in a personal communication)

What, then, of the content, the 'old shoe', the 'grit', of composition? In this matter, I'm convinced that most of our elementary schools are very efficient filters, acting in such a way that many of the most interesting, amusing, hilarious, absurd, dramatic moments of the children's lives are let outside: the range, the experiential range, of their composed repertoire is, as a result, often unbelievably narrow, tepid, and strait-lacedly dull. Again, consider the unfortunate side-effects of some recent fashions in 'creativity': the notion that 'creative writing' is essentially different from the ways in which we normally talk, think, imagine, represent, and write. One peculiar manifestation of this is the pretty or prettified poem: the product of the child's assumption that one puts on one's poetry voice or one's poetic voice in order to write creatively--that one leaves behind the lingua franca of the playground, of the home, of real life, in order to gain admittance to the hot-house[13] where art is made, where poems, like exotic and short-lived blooms, come into brief full flower. Real compositions, properly felt, genuinely felt compositions are much closer to weeds than to hot-house floribunda, and grow among the garbage, the used-car lots, the discarded 7-Up bottles, the bric-a-brac. Whitman's poem, 'There Was a Child Went Forth', gives us this, the child's phenomenal world very clearly:

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon,
    that object he became,
And that object became part of him for
    the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles
    of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories,
    and white and red clover, and the song of
    the phoebe-bird,

And the Third-month lambs and the sow's
pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal and
the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the
mire of the pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so
curiously below there, and the beautiful
curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat
heads, all became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-
month became part of him,
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-
yellow corn, and the esculent roots of the
garden,
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and
the fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and
the commonest weeds by the road,
And the old drunkard staggering home from the
outhouse of the tavern whence he had lately
risen,
And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way
to the school,
And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the
quarrelsome boys,
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the
barefoot negro boy and girl,
And all the changes of city and country wherever
he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him
and she that had conceiv'd him in her
womb and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves
than that,
They gave him afterward every day, they
became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the
dishes on the suppertable,
The mother with mild words, clean her
cap and gown, a wholesome odor
falling off her person and clothes as
she walks by,
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly,
mean, anger'd, unjust,

The blow, the quick loud word, the tight
bargain, the crafty lure,
The family usages, the language, the
company, the furniture, the yearning
and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the
sense of what is real, the thought if
after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of
night-time, the curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears so is so, or is
it all flashes and specks?
Men and women crowding fast in the streets,
if they are not flashes and specks what
are they?
The streets themselves and the facades of
houses, and goods in the windows,
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves,
the huge crossing at the ferries,
The village on the highland seen from afar
at sunset, the river between,
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling
on roofs and gables of white or brown
two miles off,
The schooner near by sleepily dropping down
the tide, the little boat slack-tow'd astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken
crests, slapping,
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of
maroon-tint away solitary by itself, the
spread of purity it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow,
the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud,
These became part of that child who went
forth every day, and who now goes, and
will always go forth every day.

Notice that the child's inclusive sensibility, like Keats's chameleon sensibility, incorporates not only the lilacs and the lambs, but also the old drunkard and the tight bargain: the kids that many of us teach are more likely to meet the latter than they are to meet the former.

But look at most recent publications here in the States on the subject of 'creative writing' and you'll see that such writing represents a strategy for misrepresenting, or not-representing-at-all, the world of the child as it is, and substituting for that world a cosy, phoney public relations image of a world as beautiful and sterile and unreal as the world of most cosmetics ads, where daffodils nod their heads in an eternally fragrant breeze.

Composition, ideally, represents the student's opportunity for presenting his (her) world as it is and as it can be; the modes for such presentation are potentially as various as the pupils, but the central and dominant mode is probably the narrative mode. Listen to any two or three elementary school children making representations of their worlds to each other, in conversation, and you will hear argument, persuasion, description, analysis, speculation, and so on: but most of all you will hear anecdotal narrative. e.g. When a child says to another, "Oh, Miss X is a So-and-So," what almost immediately follows on the categorical definition is a recounting of some specific event which will serve to give substance, concreteness, and specificity to the generalization.

I'm sure that Edwin Morgan's observations are a useful reminder to us that when the child comes to 'make a composition' his composing takes on meaning insofar as it is allowed to include, to be driven by, to respond to 'the absolute force of what actually happens'.

I'm also convinced that in this matter of composition it is <u>not</u> a sentimental lie to suggest that most of the kids are better at it than we are.

When did you yourself last compose?

Footnotes

1. See Peter Smith and Geoffrey Summerfield: Matthew Arnold and the Education of the New Order, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

2. Susan Ervin: "Imitation in Children's Language", in Eric H. Lenneberg (ed.): New Directions in the Study of Language, M. I. T. Press, 1967.

3. A good example at the adult level is Edmund Leach's essay, Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse, in Lenneberg, op. cit.

4. Cf. George Riener: How They Murdered the Second R, W. W. Norton and Co., 1969, especially pp. 315-317.

5. Our elementary schools are still, I think, characterized by visual poverty. In our pursuit of what William James castigated as 'verbalities and verbosities', we deny the importance, the primacy, the primal vividness, of the seen world. As Denise Levertov writes, "The world is not with us enough. / O taste and see..." If we can't persuade our school principals to do so, we can at least enrich our own classrooms, in such a way as to constantly provoke our pupils to open their eyes. Cf. Henry James: the Preface to The Princess Casamassima.

6. I. e. We are guilty of "plucking a set of elements from the whole work"; Susan Sontag: Against Interpretation, Dell, 1969.

7. See their fascinating essay, "The Child's Acquisition of Syntax" in Lenneberg (ed.) op. cit.

8. Op. cit. pp. 144-5. I'm not suggesting that the mother's expansions are of the same kind as the teacher's expansions, but rather that they provide an illuminating analogy and a model of successful 'teaching' to the teacher in the classroom.

9. For a detailed examination of these phenomena, see Douglas Barnes' study of language interaction in twelve lessons taught to twelve-year-olds, in Language, the Learner and the School (Penguin Books, 1969). One of his findings is that, in the sample studied, most teacher-pupil questions asked not for reasoning or for intelligent speculation but for facts, i. e. were questions to which there was only one answer, and questions to which the teacher already knew the answers.

10. One of his interesting idiosyncracies was that he preferred to use initials rather than names.

11. For this use of the term, see my essays in Creativity in English (N. C. T. E., 1968), pp. 40-44 and pp. 58-59.

12. She also illustrated it, wrote it out in clear large longhand, and bound it as a book for the seven-year-olds.

13. For Footnote P. T. O.

IMAGES OF MAN AND THE PERSUASIVE STYLE:

WRITING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

-Alton Becker
University of Michigan

Einstein is said to have said, when the atom bomb was dropped twenty-five years ago, that everything had changed with that terrible act except the mind of man. That is going to be the text for my remarks this morning. Twenty-five years after his remark, consider what has changed in our profession. The teaching of what is generally called 'English' has probably changed least of all academic disciplines. It is probably the most conservative subject in the curriculum; it looks that way to me, anyway. We have gotten used to the threat of the atom bomb and even to the pressures of technological advance, and the need for change may perhaps not seem as pressing to some of you as it does to me. However, the evidence of the need is on our college campuses, in our high schools and our elementary schools. We recently have had an SDS convention at the Univeristy of Michigan where I had opportunities to talk to some of the leaders--educational reformers, primarily. I have talked to Carl Oglesby, and I think that he would be in many ways the proper person to address this group. What those people want is an educational reform. They want a change in the University's image of what it is trying to do with its students and what its product is; they want the whole idea of "product" dropped, as a matter of fact. The conflict between the students and university, I think, goes back earlier into the schools; it is partly derived from their sense that what has been taught has so often been irrelevant: lies about the world, but not so much lies, I think, as irrelevant pictures and ancient images. In the field of English and the teaching of writing, the failure has been almost complete.

I'd like to support that statement a bit--the feeling that English is an irrelevant subject: students sit through English classes which have no carryover to their other classes; teachers grade papers and put marks on them, pass them back, go through units of study in such matters as grammar and diction and do what they have always done and neither teacher not student does what is relevant. What happens in the grade schools in so-called English classes or whatever they are labeled is a preview for what happens in colleges: the lack of relevancy in what is studied is at the center of what the college students are revolting against. This wrong or irrelevant sort of language teaching and writing teaching is, I think, based upon a mistaken or outdated or irrelevant image of the world. I think we're going to have to change quickly; as my friend Kenneth Boulding is fond of saying, "We're facing a generation brought up on demand feeding, and they're still demanding in college."

The crisis is there; and I think it reaches back to the elementary school.

Most of what goes under the name of English-teaching or the teaching of writing is primarily the teaching of a rhetoric based in large part on a classical image of man, most simply, I suppose, on Aristotle's idea of man as a rational animal or potentially so. His idea of the disciplines of logic and rhetoric develops from this image of man --logic being the mode of discourse of scientists; rhetoric being the mode of discourse of scientists and other wise men to men who aren't quite so reasonable and who have to be swayed by extra means. (Rhetoric thus conventionally becomes the sugar coating on the pill.) Logic, the argument of the educated man; rhetoric, the usually necessary mode of persuasion, a mode of aggression, a mode of battle, traditionally. Rhetoricians in the Greco-Roman world used all of their authority, the authority of their skills of speech, to shape, move and direct the policy of their society; and they were "taught" authority, especially in late classical times, taught the authoritative statements--"the best that has been thought and said." By finding the authority--that is, the truth --in the classics, the ancient and medieval speaker was empowered to deal with a problem or an enemy, defending the "truth" of his own case with quotations, illustrations, and support from the classics. Western culture developed a form of education known best to us as "liberal education" based on the study of classics--the "great books" courses of classical and medieval times--and on a rhetoric which revolved around the study and reading of literature and the weaving of magnificent authorities into magnificent speeches. If one wishes to study the techniques of rhetoric proposed by Aristotle, all of the topics of invention, if one wishes to look at the classics as sort of the data book for ideas and invention, the best sort of book in this tradition is The Syntopicon from the University of Chicago. If you have to make a speech on love and you look up love in The Syntopicon, you can weave in all of the impressive quotations from all of the authorities on love. By doing this, you convince everybody of your learning; you expose the "reasonable, true" ideas to people; and you just hope that by saying them in the right way, they'll be convincing. As Cicero has said, "Invention and the invention of arguments and techniques in rhetoric is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's case plausible." In other words, classical rhetoric is an opposition rhetoric; it is basically aggressive. The most obvious place in which one will find it today is in the courtroom as it is used, say, in a battle between two lawyers, lawyers being the leading rhetoricians of our day. One can find it on TV: in the typical DA programs where lawyers oppose each other the ideal is represented well, the faith that the truth will out if two clever people oppose each other with their rhetoric and dialectic and "combat" each other with words. This image, the classical image of rhetoric and the teaching of writing, has

been alive for almost two thousand years in the West; it is still the idea of rhetoric which is meaningful to most English teachers; that is why I say that rhetoric is a very conservative subject.

Having lost our faith in the rational animal once again (a loss of faith which comes upon us periodically in history) around a hundred years ago, we evolved a new image of man--the dominant image for people outside of English today and even for some English teachers: the image of the driven, conditioned animal developed by Freud, Pavlov and the others. I'm going to oversimplify greatly here in my remarks (the stages of the development which I am tracing were more precisely and elegantly presented by Professor Hunt[1] than I'll be able to do). In the new image of man, logic and reason now become mere surface rationalization, and their study becomes increasingly irrelevant. People outside the discipline of English (and more and more within it) lost faith in the older rhetoric based on logic, reason, and authority; yet they had very little with which to replace it. Their new art of persuasion, insofar as they evolved one in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was a rhetoric of many sorts: a rhetoric of propaganda, advertising and brain-washing in its worst aspects; a rhetoric of control, a much subtler form of control but still a basically aggressive rhetoric; a new rhetoric based on my doing something to you. A professor of mine once asserted that that is all rhetoric is--learning to do things to other people with language or learning to prevent other people from doing things to you with language. That is what the tradition had been reduced to: its essential, aggressive core.

This new sort of rhetoric based on the forms of controlling people has led to good and bad things: consider the relationship between Pavlov and Skinner and programmed instruction. I've seen some very nice forms of programmed instruction created by Don Smith and others at Michigan; I've seen some terribly threatening forms of it created by other people. I think that behavioral psychology, the stimulus--response model led to a sort of rhetoric for persuading people. The idea of "invention" in this sort of rhetoric is that one isolates the conditioning factor and then uses that to produce the sort of behavior that one wants.

I want to suggest that there is an image of man beyond those which I've discussed. I think I've heard a lot about it this morning, more than I'd anticipated I would before I came. The third image of man which I wish to discuss comes to me most clearly in the work of Carl Rogers, the psychotherapist. Others of you have gotten ideas similar to Rogers' ideas elsewhere.[2] He speaks of non-directive therapy. He speaks of a new definition of man, not of man as a rational, reasonable animal or potentially so; not necessarily of man as a driven, conditioned creature but of man as a threatened creature: a person acts in the way he acts because of a series of threats he confronts and because

he has to learn to deal with the threats of other people around him. According to this view, institutions are basically coercive; rightly or wrongly, they are based on aggression and force, and our behavior is a matter of learning strategies to handle aggression and force; the power that one has is proportionate to the degree of threat that he can produce over another person or institution.

This image is the pervasive image according to which we operate in dealing with society. We surely use it when we create a foreign policy which is based on the idea of how much threat we can bring to bear on a situation. Given this world of threat, Rogers says, can we develop a way of really communicating with people? Can we develop a new rhetoric which takes the logic of threat into consideration, especially now that our coercive power is so tremendous and widespread? If only a few people have the capacity to threaten and the power to coerce in their hands, threatenings and power can order our social world, I suppose. But when everybody has the capacity to threaten or the 'power' in his hands, we have to find a new way to regulate our world. As a footnote I want to say that the existence of a universal capacity to threaten seems to me to be the message of what happened in the Detroit riots a few weeks ago. People in Detroit said, "Look, we've got guns, too; let's find another way to handle this; I can shoot just as much as you can shoot." Psychologically, what was happening in Detroit was that men said, "If you're going to use coercive power, we've got coercive power; let's find another answer."

Rogers is one of the few who's looking for another answer. I wish now to suggest that what we need is a rhetoric of threat reduction, not a rhetoric of aggression.

As Rogers points out, one of the first things one can do to create threat is to <u>evaluate</u> people. This is what Hunt was talking about earlier: "token reward" systems and putting the stars on students' papers. Even if we just say good things about people and not bad, even if we <u>just reward</u> and not punish, we're still producing threat. It doesn't take very long for a student to learn that not getting the stars is the same as getting the axe.

The rhetoric of threat-reduction is not authoritarian. One doesn't look for all sorts of ways to coerce others with one's authority. Above all, the rhetoric which we seek is non-manipulative. One of the most threat-producing things of all is the sense that "I'm being manipulated; what do you want me to do now?" Children learn this very early. They know the game and they learn the strategies for surviving.

We sense manipulation and we feel threatened.

Now in place of manipulation, Rogers has suggested something called Rogerian debate. It is a form of debate which is, I think, the only new form since classical times--and it works according to a very different psychology than does classical debate. Its aim is not to control, but to communicate. Communication becomes not a way of getting at the truth, not a way of getting you to act in a certain way, but it becomes an end in itself: communication itself is the goal. It is not a tool for anything else, but is itself therapeutic. As Rogers says, when communication occurs, it is therapeutic within the person and between people. Rogerian debate is an attempt to set up the situation, to set up the environment, in which communication can occur.

The idea is of course not entirely new to people in rhetoric or to English teachers. From Aristotle's time we have had the idea that rhetoric is based, in part, on identification and on the building of community. Rogerian debate works through a progression in discussion--a kind of dialectic--usually between people who feel very strongly opposed to each other. One person tries to restate the other's point of view: this is the initial point: an attempt is made to restate another person's thinking, to see another person's problems until he's satisfied, until he says, "Yes, you stated my point thoroughly." The next step is an attempt to show the area of validity in what 'you' say, the area where 'I' find agreement, where I believe you're right. The area of opposition is left aside.

The faith which informs this particular theory--all theories have one little place where faith comes in--is the faith that, when you work at understanding another person's ideas, the other person will take a chance and begin to behave in the same way: he'll begin to try to communicate with you. He might begin by trying to state your point of view and trying to see the area of validity in it.

From this perspective, rhetoric becomes a sort of dialectic to light up one's own blind spots; it is not aggression but a two-way thing, an awareness of another person's frame and picture.

It would be a great advance if education were thought of as getting children interested in each other's problems and each other's solutions to their problems. Rhetoric is necessary because of the diversity of our various images of the world--the oftentimes threatening diversity.

The new rhetoric, necessary because of the diversity of our images, has as its goal communication: learning to see other people's problems and solutions.

The different images of man or different kinds of rhetoric of which I speak are not mutually exclusive (I've artificially separated them for the purpose of discussing them), but one could make an interesting study of when one or another image is dominant at different points in history; there may well be a relation between the stability of the world and the form of persuasion which people use.[3]

Let us take up the question of "teaching writing" at this point, giving our topic this historical perspective. How then can we teach writing at the elementary level? By writing I don't mean the transferring of symbols from sound to writing; I am not talking about handwriting, penmanship, or reading: these things are done in very interesting ways in the schools and, I think, done fairly well. Children generally seem to learn to handle a pencil and to read in our culture; they don't seem sometimes to <u>want to learn to read</u> but they learn. These basic skills seem to me not to be the center of our problem. (Those of you who are specialists in this reading and handwriting will know of a lot more problems than I do, but I don't want to talk about them now). Writing, as I use the word here, means the student's putting down on paper words which give us his picture of the world; we could extend our concern to all communication--speaking, drawing pictures, and so forth. Writing is a matter of a person's setting forth what he wants other people to understand about himself and his view of the world.

The most interesting distinction, the most interesting theoretical point made in linguistics in recent years, has been the distinction between surface and deep grammar--a very rich distinction, related, in part to the old distinction between the <u>grammatical</u> subject or object of a sentence and its <u>logical</u> subject or object: it involves the assumption that there are surface categories, such as the subject of a clause, and deeper categories--agents, instruments, locations, etc.--categories underlying the surface categories. Recently in some of our own work in tagmemic theory, and in the work of Charles Fillmore at Ohio State, who has worked out what he calls a modern "case theory", we have come to learn a lot more about the operation of the deep categories underlying the surface structures of language; we have learned how these deep categories are 'controlled' in the surface structure of the language by devices (focus devices Kenneth Pike often calls them) which process an underlying proposition. If you create a proposition in which there is an agent and an action, a goal, a time, and a place--given this kind of proposition--many sorts of sentences can be written. We have a sentence like, "John walked to the store to get his mother some butter," in which the agent is the subject, the one who did the walking. We can bring many other things up into the subject position: we can say, "The store is the place where John went to get the butter,"--the location becomes the subject. We

can say, "His mother was the person that John got the butter for." "Butter was the thing that John went to the store to get." These are all obvious manipulations using the verb "be" and various grammatical categories after it.

Again, consider: "John opened the door with the key;" "The door opened;" "The key opened the door;" "The door was opened by John;" and so forth; all different surface realizations of a single set of underlying, or 'deep' categories. And these deep categories, as I think Fillmore more than anybody else is pointing out, are the true "universals of language."

The categories allow us to get from one language to another. These "categories" that he calls "cases" are the universals which permit a person speaking in Thai or Burmese, the languages with which I work, to learn English by learning how these categories are manifested in English. A certain feature of a Burmese proposition might be manifested in English as a subject, a modifier of the subject, or as part of the verb. For instance, given the English sentence, "The key opened the door," there is no way of putting the agent into the clause; one cannot say, "The key opened the door by John." One has to use two sentences or embed sentences or use some such device. In other languages, Philippine languages for instance, there are common grammatical devices which allow for one's saying the equivalent of, "The key opened the door by John." Although languages differ as to their surface realizations of the deep categories, the categories themselves are probably universal.

At the level of the 'paragraph', we find something quite similar to this idea of an underlying deep structure, an underlying logical structure which can be represented in a sequence of sentences in what I shall call "discursive plots." Anthropologists have known for a long time about narrative plots which seem to be universal; and V. Propp, Stith Thompson and others have collected folk tales displaying a similar pattern of action from around the world: we can find analogies to the archetypal plots of our own cowboy movies in the plots of stories from India and from other countries. There seem to be some basic underlying 'plots' for narratives which are fairly universal. And there are probably other plots which are unique to a culture or an area.

At Michigan, a few years ago, we asked, "Are there some basic underlying plots for expository discourse?" We're still working on the problem. The things that traditionally were called classification, contrast, illustration, etc. seem to be the underlying logical or rhetorical structures; they can be represented by a series of possible strategic linguistic ploys in sequences of sentences.

We have also asked, "Are these discursive plots for organizing underlying logical or cognitive patterns psychologically real?" The answer seems to be that they are. At Michigan we set up tests first to see if these plots were the underlying structure of paragraphs. We took all paragraph indentations out of passages, and we asked our subjects to mark the places where paragraphs began; we found very high agreement among subjects. (The data has been published in the reports of the Center for Research on Language and Language Behavior at the University of Michigan.) Then everybody said, "Well, of course, they can tell by the meanings of the words in the passage. What you are describing is a semantic phenomenon." I felt very strongly at that point that what we were describing was a grammatical phenomenon, too. Just as the underlying categories in a sentence are marked by certain grammatical markers in English (order, endings, etc.), so also the "plots" are marked by grammatical markers; we took out all the content words from the passages and we substituted nonsense words--a good old-fashioned Friesian experiment--and did the same experiments again. We found almost the same results--that the students identified the paragraphs without knowing what in the world the paragraphs were about. We asked them to guess what the paragraphs were about, and we got a wide variety of answers. They seem to have relied on certain grammatical cues which suggested what kinds of conceptual "plotting" of sequences of sentences was implicit.[4] We've now begun to isolate these cues.

There are many ways in which a conceptual or logical structure can be 'plotted' and ultimately represented in sentences just as an underlying proposition can have many, many sentences which are representations or manifestations of it. The 'plots' represent conventional images and expectations we have about the way in which the logic of our encounter with the world can be represented: they vary somewhat from country to country; they also display some likenesses from country to country and language to language. They are our means of 'processing' experience.

I think learning to manipulate these discursive plots is something which could happen in the elementary school. One would not have to be taught them, one could learn them. I like, especially, John Holt's idea[5] of creative drama as a way of learning the paradigm narrative-dramatic plots, I think. And I had the thought, as I was listening to Mr. Holt, "How do you learn expository plots? What's the expository parallel to the child's created drama?" And it seemed to me that the equivalent in the realm of the discursive to what creative drama is in the realm of the fictive-narrative is pre-reporting: a semi-journalistic situation, where children consider reporting about an event to others and decide as a group how the event is to be reported to a group of other people. The place where I

learned to write, insofar as I learned to write in school, was in the journalism laboratory and in newspaper work--not in an English class. I wasn't taught journalistic rhetoric except the old heuristic of journalism, who, why, where, when, etc.; but I learned it: I learned how to write a paragraph, how to lead readers--I had to do it over and over again and I had people my own age who read what I wrote and they would say, "That was lousy," and "I don't get this." Nobody on the faculty did anything about my newspaper writing; nobody did for that writing what most English teachers do with writing ninety percent of the time, i.e. editing.

I want to suggest that editing, even in the simplest form where the instructor re-writes sentences between the lines (which is the editing of teachers who are moving away from the practice of editing), was missing from the writing experience which taught me to write. I want to suggest that editing should be dropped from the schools. The teacher as authoritarian evaluator is inconsistent with the non-competitive, non-threatening, relativistic image of rhetoric that I have been trying to propose as a model. To evaluate a student's behavior in an authoritarian way is to produce a threat. Ultimately, it is to produce what is the most widespread phenomenon of all among writing students, the painful hang-up about writing anything at all. Writing is just too scary. It is mysterious: "Somehow when I write something down, I think I know what I'm doing but I get back an evaluation which I don't understand, which doesn't seem to be responding to what I thought I was saying, but to something that seems to me irrelevant." What does the editing matter? It gets in the way; to return to linguistic terminology, it is marking surface structure.

If the instructor marks only the surface phenomena and thinks that he is just marking the surface, doing a commendable job of trying to polish up the student for society, he should also be aware that he is evaluating, in a very deep sense, the student's image of the world. As a matter of fact, the student's particular image of the world is usually considered irrelevant to the goals of the English class. The result is a defensiveness, a resentment and learning to write "what the teacher wants," a writing which has no relation to what the student needs to say or feels he wants to say. I find such a concern for surface grammar and surface editing widespread even in the best and most modern of schools, with no exceptions that I can think of. The teacher justifies his surface concerns by elevating a body of theory which he calls "grammar." He, as it were, indirectly says to the child, "We have this serious thing called grammar; if you learn this, you, too, can be a surface editor. You'll know the rules." Hence, teachers spend time justifying surface editing by teaching what is thought to be its theory: grammar, be it traditional, structural, transformational, tagmemic, or whatever. The movement in this country is toward more and more complex grammar books no matter what their educational

value in the schools. We are now getting a series of programmed grammars all the way down to the first grade, so that by the time the student gets through, he'll know "grammar." The present study of grammar should be seen for what it is, however: an attempt by the teacher and the system to justify surface editing.

I do not wish to knock the teaching of grammar but only the illusion that it is relevant to learning to write. I would suggest that in the schools, maybe in the sixth grade, maybe in the junior high school, maybe earlier, there should be a course set aside on the history and structure of the English language. The abstract study of how to describe the way a language works can be a fascinating subject for school children and an exciting subject for those few school teachers who decide really to become specialists in linguistics. Nothing in the study of grammar--the study of language description--has anything to do with writing courses, however. For the sake of both, the teaching of writing ought to be strictly divorced from the teaching of descriptions of the language. Just as the medieval doctor caused more disease than he cured, the present composition teacher and his course in grammar and editing, no matter which grammar, causes more disease than he cures. And I really believe that by about grade five kids cease to enjoy writing, mainly because of the medieval writing doctor.

Grammar is no problem for the native speaker; as Martin Joos has suggested, completeness is the problem. Like the beards and the beads and bare feet and other things which take care of themselves on the campus, grammar takes care of itself in the life of a native speaker. Although grammar is what people get excited about, the problem which bedevils students is not how the language is put together -- the subject of grammar--not the machine or the code; they have a perfect intuitive understanding of this. The student's problem is communicating to somebody else as completely as he can his image of the world, and that is what Joos means by completeness. And it is on this capacity for completeness of communication that we ought to concentrate; the only way to get at completeness of communication is to create situations which allow teachers to drop their evaluative behavior in the classroom: primarily this means giving up grading.

Given the rhetorical stance of the present composition class, which requires the introduction of threat, and given the basis of present rhetoric, its teaching of the capacity to threaten, I am tempted to say at this point that the best thing we could do right now in the teaching of writing is to stop and do nothing. At least then we might not be doing any harm. We are actively doing harm to students in schools with our writing courses now, tying students all up, taking nice fluent six-year-olds who can play spontaneously and poetically

with language and making them into tied up eight-year-olds who hate to write and who think poems are for sissies. Given our plight, what can a teacher do?

First, we can help students to solve their own problems. We can encourage language play, which is just natural and lovely. My son, who hates English now, sits home and writes rock songs and plays them on his guitar. They are lovely. There is truth in the idea that Bob Dylan may be one of our best poets right now. The Beatles, Janis Ian with "Society's Child," and other lyric poets are producing the most relevant literature for our children. For young people in junior high school, writing a rock song would be a wonderful way to learn composition. You can begin composition teaching by encouraging students to play around with surface forms of language--the shifting of words and phrases in a free sort of way. One of the only ways in which the linguist as a linguist might really help the teacher is to describe ways of manipulating language and styles of processing underlying propositions and sequences of propositions. Some of his theoretical underpinning, explaining what goes on and what can go on in language play, might perhaps help the teacher become aware of all the possibilities of language play. That is probably one way that the linguist can really contribute something to the teacher of writing. It is not an awfully large contribution, but an important one, I think.

Second, we can suggest to students other images of the world, encouraging their exploration of them. And this is what I think Kenneth Pike, Richard Young, and a few others are trying to do in developing a new heuristic, a new art of invention. The heuristic has not yet been brought down to the grade school level, but I think that it could be. Pike's interest is in how you solve problems which involve getting inside an image of the world radically different from that of our own time and culture. I've confronted the question in work with Peace Corps trainees: "How do you learn how to behave in a completely foreign environment? What sort of tools do you have?" The question for the linguist is: "How do you work in the field?" Given a language that one doesn't understand, how does one write a grammar of it and learn to speak it competently? Pike, in the course of trying to make a set of tools for getting through to the image of the world of people radically different from us, has developed the idea that three perspectives are possible in looking at any given event or thing as one endeavors to perceive coherence in it: the perspective which looks for particles, that which looks for waves, and that which looks for fields. Pike's idea is that the three perspectives developed by modern physics--the particle, wave and field approaches--may suggest useful modes of approach to other phenomena, approaches which will allow us to see not only our own cultural frames but from those of other people or cultures. If I may use myself as an example: that I am a distinct, unique person I know, but my doctor sees me as a

biological process. And other people see me as fulfilling a role in a society where a grid of dependencies interlock. In other words, I can see myself as a discrete, independent particle; as a dynamic sort of wave process going through history and time; or as a point of intersection in some sort of field structure. To understand me as a person, you have to know all three perspectives, none of which is false and none of which is completely true because each errs by leaving out something.

We can encourage students to practice a shifting of perspectives in working with language, a taking of new perspectives--looking at a number of different phenomena through different frames or as different people in the community, given their occupational concerns, would look. Consider a possible interviewing technique in the grade schools, for instance; we, and our elementary school students, can take out the tape recorders, talk to people about something that they are interested in, bring back the tapes and talk about what frames, visions, perspectives they have found.

In the study of literature we can get beyond the western perspective, and this is relevant to the training of teachers. The image of a "culture" that starts in Greece, moves to Rome, up Europe, across to England, and then across the ocean to us is the dominant academic image of the "progress of culture." This picture of history and literature is one of the most harmful things which we perpetuate in our schools, and is perhaps the source of most of our present trouble in Asia.

The literature used in the classes should perhaps not be the most familiar but the most strange: the radically alien perspective.

The third point I want to suggest is that, to teach writing, to teach the management of language in any form which the street does not teach, we must establish a classroom in which the students help each other. They should really take responsibility. They should not be given merely the illusion of responsibility: teachers should <u>really</u> let them take the full responsibility for responding to each other's work. Stay out of it. If grading is necessary, let them do it. They'll be quite kind usually. I don't know how to get across to other teachers how vain the evaluative games are. And, what is more, we may have too much segregation of ages in our schools. If one lets older kids teach the younger kids in the way that older teach younger around the house after school and all summer long, then the lessons are really learned. It <u>matters</u> how one of your friends responds to what you write.

The fourth point is that using all sorts of "media" would help. The tape recorder can be an instrument for the collection of sounds that

these students wish to examine--sounds from around the home or the community that someone wants to bring in; talk, things that people have said, can be put on tape and fiddled with. Drama can be used. Mr. Holt has suggested that we get students outside the classroom and school building as a way of getting into the world in a more than figurative sense; it is also a way of getting into the essential problem of writing--crossing the chasm between "me" and "you". Not just the student's peers but other ages should be involved in the journey out of the classroom. A use of movies and a movie camera--it's not too expensive to be a part of the standard equipment for the school--would allow for recording from a variety of perspectives and for working out language to go with the perspectives. Communication was a good word a few years ago. I wish that it were still respectable, for its use might foster the idea that writing is one form among many forms of setting forth what one wants others to understand comparable to collecting sounds with a tape recorder or taking pictures with a movie camera. Its currency might encourage the idea that we can handle the same phenomena with various techniques.

In the sort of classroom that I envisage, education would get the kids interested in each other's perspectives and images of the world. Communication becomes the end in itself. We should leave the students alone not by default, not because we don't know what to do, but out of a new and maybe a very old wisdom about learning.

As I. A. Richards said in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, there have been many attempts to revise the teaching of writing; thus far all of them have been poking at the ashes on the top. I haven't gotten down to the coals yet. In speaking of the possibility of focusing on deep structures in working with the language of the child, I hope that I have gotten a little beyond the ashes. I do not wish to discuss how we grade papers or what we should mark as right and wrong usage. We must ask some basic questions about the teacher and the student and the classroom itself which can, I think, get us beyond the ashes on the top.

Footnotes

1. See The Craft of Teaching and the Schooling of Teachers (University of Nebraska Press, 1968), pp. 1-21.

2. Cf., for example, the existentialist psychotherapy of R. D. Laing in Britain.

3. It was Richard Young who first suggested to me that the emphasis in rhetoric shifts from authoritative presentation to dialectic or relativistic presentation as man's faith in a stable world wanes. The point is discussed in Wilbur Samuel Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961). In discussing the rhetorical theories of Ramon Lull and Peter Ramus, Howell writes (p. 9):

> Both of these reformers were articulating misgivings which the society around them shared, and both were seeking to bring learning into a closer relation with the practical needs which it exists to satisfy. So it always is. A theory of communication is an organic part of a culture. As the culture changes, so will the theory change.

Howell cites the concomitant rise of science, the middle class, and Protestantism as forces which disrupted the medieval world and led to several new rhetorics, particularly those of the Ramists, the Neo-Ciceronians, the Systematists, and the Port-Royalists. He associates with the latter Bacon's implied new rhetoric in The Advancement of Learning. A similar tracing of the parallel between cultural changes and changes in rhetorical theory can be found in Donald Lemen Clark, Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education (New York: Columbia, 1957).

Also see Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., "A New Theory of Philosophical Argumentation" in Johnstone and Natanson, eds., Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Argumentation (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965). Johnstone discusses the relation of absolute and relative types of philosophical argumentation to times of social stability and social upheaval, respectively.

4. Among these cues are lexical transitions (e.g., therefore, indeed, etc.), consistency of anaphoric relationships, verb forms (expanded versus simple verb forms), inversion of syntactic order, dummy subject markers (e.g., there, it), grammatical parallelism, etc. Paragraph markers seem to function in clusters; seldom does a single cue (except indentation) mark a paragraph. Furthermore, different rhetorical plots seem to be marked by different formal cues.

Currently I am attempting to derive all paragraph plots from underlying question-answer syntagmemes plus conjoining rules. An explanation of our competence to distinguish an answer to a question from a non-answer (e.g., What is John doing? *She was here. He's singing.) and to recognize proper conjoining (John cooked the rice. The rice cooked. *John and the rice cooked.) seems sufficient to explain most sequencing rules.

5. See The Craft of Teaching and the Schooling of Teachers, pp. 21-28. John Holt was, at the point cited, giving a brief account of the use of dramatic improvisation in schools in England.

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